MARGARET CULKIN BANNING · VINCENT SHEEAN

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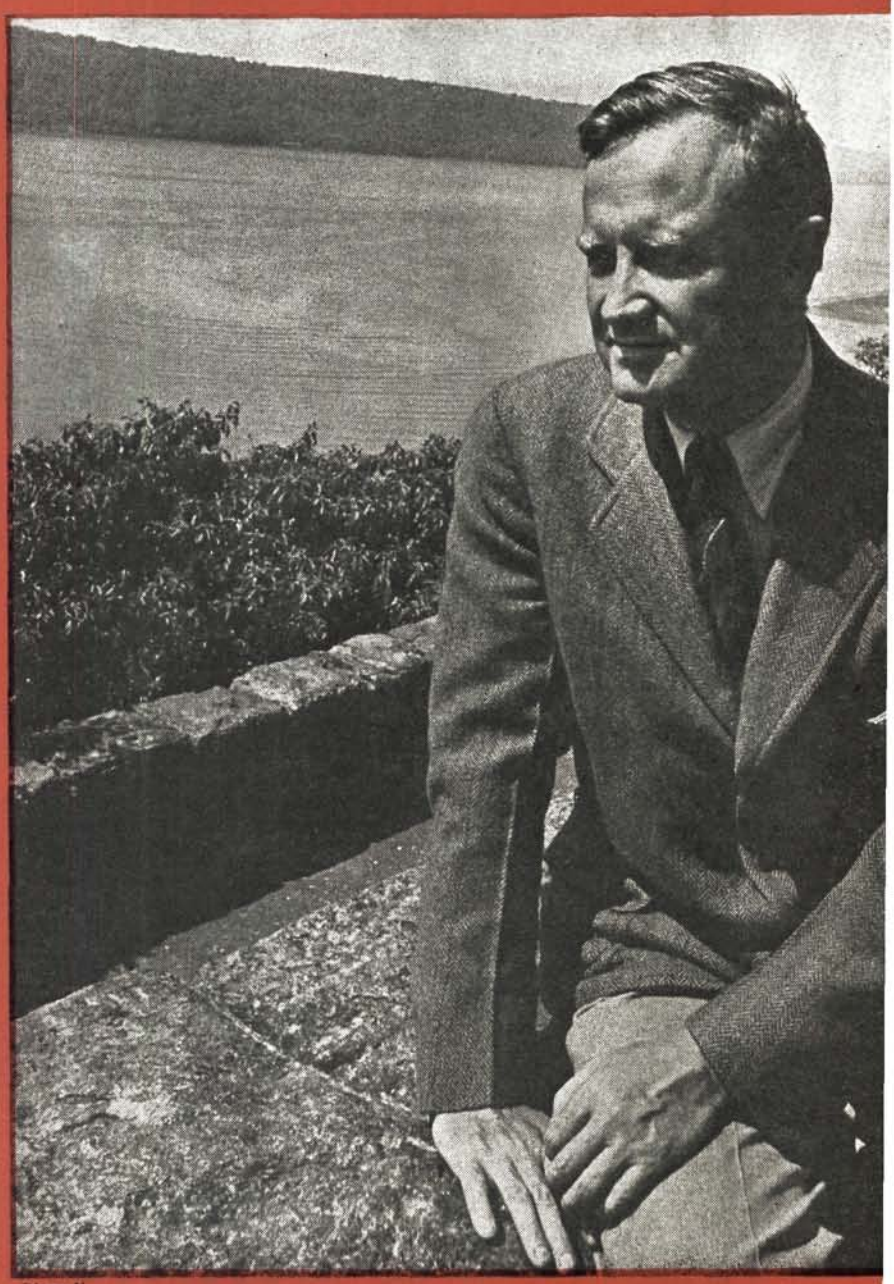

Disraeli

Carl Carmer, biographer of the Hudson River

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Changing Moral Standards in Fiction

BY MARGARET CULKIN BANNING

Paramount

"'The Sheik' did for a vast circle what 'The Sun Also Rises' did for a more exclusive company" . . . (Agnes Ayres and Rudolph Valentino in the film version of "The Sheik.")

YOU put down "The Wild Palms" and think it over. If this Charlotte is a heroine, this lady with the "yellow stare," whose only inhibition is a preference for some privacy during sexual relations, and if you are to accord her sympathy or at least the understanding which is given to heroines even in misconduct, what a long way fiction has come since Hester Prynne was a girl to worry about. How its standards have changed since the compromising situation of Lily Bart could create a social problem. And it did, within the memory of many a fiction reader of today. What, you may wonder, are the women of fiction coming to? And the men? Are there any standards of morality left in modern fiction, or does anything go nowadays?

This story is, to be sure, one of degeneration. Each of the two parallel themes asserts the horror of the bondage in which women can hold men, and Wilbourne's tragedy is that of a man's abandonment of his last ethic for a woman. The theme has been dealt with before, but it is unusual in this case because it seems to depart from nothing. Temptations, passions, even frivolity often cause characters in fiction to turn to murder or suicide or metaphysics. The story of an attack upon or an abandonment of moral standards is not new. As each story tears open the individual case, the reader sympathizes or condemns. He praises or pities as he follows a moral or emotional conflict in fiction, and that is what the writer is always trying to get his readers to do. It is why he writes. But standards have to be set up if there is to be a departure from them. This book has none.

"'The Grapes of Wrath' will say anything that is true . . . but it has a social accent" . . .

"The Wild Palms" is not a typical novel of its period. Certainly Mr. Faulkner would hate to have it thought so. It is not for ordinary reading or the common taste. But it helps to cut another notch in the production of fiction. For two reasons at least. First, because it is probably as free in its description of lust and sex conduct as a book of general circulation can be; and second, because it has not aroused the reading interest nor had the success of other books of equal provocation, and this in spite of its fine and dramatic prose. The book does not interest people as they were interested by "Sanctuary" (also a story of degeneration), or by "To Have and Have Not," or by "The Postman Always Rings Twice," or by "Butterfield-8." This is an odd and perhaps an insulting grouping, but all these books have as their chief characters people who lack moral standards. And since it is not the prose which falls down in "The Wild Palms," its comparative lack of success must lie either in the subject or the philosophy.

It is not that the book shocks or revolts the people who read it or would like to read it. That happens often enough in modern fiction, but thousands of readers have passed the point where anything like shock will stop them. They want to know facts. If a story is worth it, if it has more of what is true than the one read before, readers will take the shock or even disgust that may go with its perusal. They can take the shock in "The Grapes of Wrath" by the hundred thousand and they are doing it.

This may be a veering toward the functional book. It may be, and more likely is, an aroused conscience, more social than personal, in writers and readers.

Standards of morals in fiction are set up jointly by writers and readers, with the readers always having the final say because they can reject a book. There is, in any one period, a tacit agreement between authors and audience as to what can be said and as to what is believable, even in fiction. But beyond this there is often a disagreement as the writer experiments, and often a test case appears. Here the writer always is the one who acts as seducer or apostle, as the case may be, by making his representation of untouched or taboo subjects, or his novel treatment of moral issues, plausible, provocative, and finally irresistible if he can.

There have been many test cases in fiction among different generations and groups of readers, as fiction widened its field. At first the only possible heroine was chaste and virtuous. Then the reader's truthfulness, or perhaps his boredom, followed the writer into new fields. Chastity had a variation. The heroine might be strong in love although weak in character. She was the Scarlet Woman, who sinned, suffered, and was pitied in her fall.

The morals of fiction, as in life, revolve to a great extent around the

Next Week

THE OPEN SKY
By L. A. G. STRONG
Reviewed by Richard A. Cordell

ARMIES OF SPIES
By JOSEPH GOLLOMB
Reviewed by Courtney Ryley Cooper

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chastity of women and the general attitude toward it. In story and fact it is accepted that the safety of the race depends upon its women. And as women broke through old myths this was told in fiction. Virtue was not its own reward. Scheming women used sex to their own advantage and got away with it. There was Thackeray's Becky Sharp. There was Balzac's Cousin Betty. They were not good women and they were not heartbroken. With the first recognition of this, fiction had a new cutting edge. But moral values were not torn down, nor thrown away, even if the central character of a piece of fiction ignored them. These salty women characters were exceptions and proved the rule of heroines.

There was still an undepicted type of woman who must have existed long before she broke into fiction. It took years of feminist struggle, a great war, and the shattering of ideals that couldn't stand up to war's actuality to break down the resistance to her as a heroine. This was the woman who was immoral because she enjoyed being so, for the fun she got out of it. In other words, she was the woman who is now called, in and out of fiction, the bitch. The first time I met her in fiction was as Brett in "The Sun Also Rises." She altered the whole gallery of heroines. Cousin Betty was after money. Madame Bovary wanted position and protection. Brett did not care for either reward. She wanted sex experience. She took it here and there. She could not even tie it up to love. And she dominated her own book and was liked. Soon there were innumerable fictional copies of her, and copies of Warner Fabian's girls and of Scott Fitzgerald's girls. We became used to women in fiction who liked their sex straight and who were, for a while at least, willing to take the consequences. They got harder and more lustful as the tide of fiction rolled on, and the most extraordinary occasions and locales of pleasure had to be devised for them.

But these were not really popular standards in fiction, though many people were accepting such heroines. Standards of morality in fiction vary somewhat in fiction as they do in life. Fashionable people and sophisticated readers always "go it harder." But in what might be called the lower income groups of fiction readers, a change in standards was also going on. "The Sheik" did for a vast circle what "The Sun Also Rises" did for a more exclusive company. The publication and popularity of "The Sheik" had a certain importance. Badly written and sentimental as it was, it accepted the fact of seduction where before only the threat of it had been allowed in stories for the same audience. This time the thing went through, to the shivers of the unsophisticated. There was an implied reservation that this sort of seduction had better happen in a desert, and must be rectified by subsequent awakening of love all around, but the story jerked the average American woman reader closer to reality. So some years later there was a public for "Bad Girl." And this time the scene was the home ground.

It is books like these rather than books which dwell upon sex routine or have salacious incidents in them which really affect moral standards as they appear in fiction. The exposure of the body, no matter how brazenly, may not affect any standard, though it may affront modesty. But the popular forgiveness of a seduction, the acceptance of a seduced heroine into normal life, the plausibility of her getting on all right in society after the fact, does affect a standard. The Scarlet Letter is as dead, as a modern fictional theme, as its unfair cruelty is impossible in modern judgment on delinquency. It is true today in reading circles which are not considered over-sophisticated, and which are fed by magazines commanding, between them, a circulation of some thirty million readers, that an abortion may now be a proper fictional problem. The subsequent death of the heroine is not necessary, though she or those about her must realize that her action was criminal and dangerous. No girl is out of the running for heroine because she is unchaste—if, that is, she does not persist in unchastity. The so-called bitch is not accepted in popular fiction. But neither is the heroine who has only a smug virtue to adorn her.

Fiction is by no means a perfect mirror of life. It is far too apt to mirror the impatiences, dissipations, and desires of small groups and the sentiments and hopes of large ones. But in either case the best effort is to write and to see the truth. The shift away from a false and prudish attitude in fiction toward realism was actually progress toward morality. The changing of moral attitudes went along with the freshening and deepening stream of sex knowledge. But there were and there are other influences at work on moral standards of fiction. There was a growing social consciousness and there was a hunger for a new ideal.

This begins to show, even in the tough young school of fiction. It is apparent in a kind of literary wistfulness, a wish that, even if there isn't, there could be such a thing as decent love and decent living. The note can be heard in John O'Hara's "Hope of Heaven" and in Jerome Ellison's recently released "The Prisoner Ate a Hearty Breakfast."

Books without any moral standards or any hope of them, especially the ones which pride themselves on such lacks, are beginning to approach the end of a blind street. They have nowhere to go. It is hard to keep on making interesting stories out of people who are only game and unafraid and headed for the rocks. The fiction readers have found this out. The writers are finding it out. Alcoholism is all right as a fictional setting for a while; but anyone, even a reader, gets tired of being with people who are tight all the time. He gets tired of being with people who keep on going to bed with each other. It stops being interesting and credible. The writer cannot establish his heroines in life. He must end on a sour note which is personal catastrophe but not important tragedy. He has to send his heroines over a cliff or give them an overdose of veronal or grind them up in a

(*Continued on page* 14)

Broadcast to the Scholars in the Eyrie

BY DAVID ROSS

EAGLES, leave your sky
Of mummied air
To the embalmer's care
Or curator's catalog;
Serve no more with idolatry
The monastic stratosphere;
The crag, cowled in fog.

Shatter the glacial trance
That grips in cataleptic vise
The blood's circumstance;
Thaw out the compassionate marrow
In the brothering air
Of residential skies
Tenanted by man and sparrow.
Now time is germinal
With pods of bursting days,
Whose air is crucial
With magnetic loyalties.
Man bursts his private shore of skin;
His pulses liberate their tides
To wider commonwealths;
Eagles, lift your quarantine.

Now is cock-crow to torpid suns
Pillowed in the mind;
Antennaed light runs
Tendrils to the earth. The blind
Who fingered life with braille,
Now drink the world with sight.

Eagles, spread sail!
Leave the glacial seas
For your just home and kin;
Declare your blood's allegiance
As lover and citizen.

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Old Man Hudson

THE HUDSON. By Carl Carmer. Plus a Supplementary Essay on "Rivers and American Folk," by the late Constance Lindsay Skinner as original editor of the Series "Rivers of America." Illustrated by Stow Wengenroth. New York: Farrar & Rinehart. 1939. 434 *pp., with index.* $2.50.

Reviewed by JOHN PALMER GAVIT

REGARDLESS of any demurrer hereinafter expressed or implied—a corking book this, by Dr. Carl Lamson Carmer, poet and novelist and Litt. D. of Elmira College; hitherto best-known, perhaps, for his "Stars Fell on Alabama" and "Listen for a Lonesome Drum." I commend it with enthusiasm, both as fruit of evidently long and exhaustive research *con amore* in documents and by first-hand investigation, and as exceptionally charming writing. Out of eons of geological time, nobody knows how many centuries of human life, upwards of four hundred years of written history, and personal contacts with men and women, from shad-fishermen to a thinly anonymous President of the United States resident on the river bank, he has derived a river-biography crackling with human interest, especially for anyone who like myself has this "Old Man Hudson" in his heart. All about the Hudson Valley, from the little tarn Tear-o'-the-Clouds under Mount Marcy in the Adirondacks to the great harbor where the mighty stream stalks majestically out into the Atlantic to meet the commerce of the whole world—some of it nowadays on its way up-river to the expensively fabricated "Port" of Albany; the river itself, and between the mountain skylines east and west the people notable and obscure who have done things therein, thereon, and therefrom. He has boiled down cunningly an immense amount of information, fact, and legend; most of it familiar enough but much of it new—to me anyway—and has made all of it come alive.

Jealously I read it, as one confronting a rival lover; for this particular river is a part of me. A major element in my blood is Hudson River water; I was born with my toes in it. I have traversed almost every mile of it and most of its tributaries, from source to sea. Seventy-odd years never out of sight of it without homesickness, I have loved it all my life, even though thrice it tried to drown me and once nearly killed me with the ever-endemic typhoid in the bad old days (to which Carmer alludes, hopeful for a clean river as of old) when the city of Albany, like other Hudson River towns, used to drink its own sewage, diluted with that of the communities up-stream. In that river I learned to swim, on it I rowed and paddled and sailed, skated, and watched them dynamiting the towering ice-jams downstream that back the water far up into city streets, incidentally enriching the lowlands as does the flooding Nile. On summer evenings I have made love on it in the moonlight turning the water overside into glittering silver.

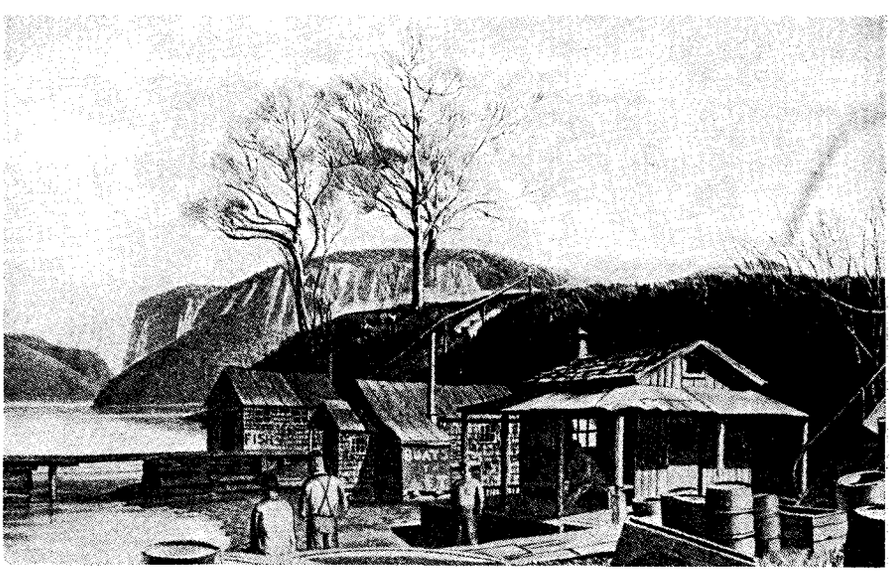
Of that jealousy . . . Carmer never lived on, to say nothing of in, the river; he was born way back in Cortland County, moving thence upstate to the Mohawk and the Erie Canal, both of which he knows like the back of his hand—as witness his "Listen for a Lonesome Drum." He never trudged down in the spring dawnlight to chaffer for silver-backed shad for breakfast, out of the sailing-sloops just in on the morning tide. He never tasted or even smelled, I would guess, the famous smoked "Albany beef," sturgeon caught within sight down Castleton way and hanging in four-foot pink carcasses outside the redolent fish-shops down State Street by the docks. Nevertheless I find that he has hereditary right to love this river as I see he does. He told Franklin Roosevelt of his grandfather's great-grandfather, Isaac Carmer, born along the Hudson in 1750, who used to sing Dutch cradle-songs, fought in the Revolution, and popped off untimely at age 102. One Abraham Carmer, a great-great-great uncle or something, was one of the signers of the "Coxsackie Declaration of Independence," which, two months before the Mecklenburg Declaration and more than a year before the decisive one at Philadelphia, told the world that Americans intended to govern themselves. Others of his ancestry lived along the Hudson; so maybe after all he too has in his blood the Hudson River water, from days way back before "modern civilization" enriched it.

Boats, large and small, paddling, sailing and steam, cross almost every page—Carmer has a passion for them—from Giovanni da Verrazano's *Dauphin* and Henry Hudson's *Half Moon* to the lamented river princess *Mary Powell* and today's *Alexander Hamilton*. Even the deep-sea whalers upon whose vicissitudes once depended the prosperity of Hudson and Poughkeepsie. He goes unnecessarily far afield, I think, in the tall tales of the seafarers, though I admit the temptation was almost irresistible. But with all his keen interest in the Erie Canal which he marries to the River, and in people of whose human nature this book reeks, I can't understand his giving so little hint of the teeming life on the canal-boats which in immense "tows" used to pass incessantly up and downstream; populated by a peculiar folk, men, women, and children who had no other homes.

With what success Mr. Carmer has captured for the rank outsider the soul of the Hudson, as Mark Twain captured the soul of the Mississippi, as Emil Ludwig captured that of the Nile, I'm blest if I can tell; for how may I distinguish what I read *in* this book from what I read *into* it, with my heart in my throat and my boyhood throbbing behind my eyes?

It's my Hudson River flowing through it. The fine illustrations by Stow Wengenroth enrich it substantially. It's worth anybody's money and time, whether or not he can read into it all that we honest-to-god Hudson River boys do.

John Palmer Gavit was for many years managing editor of the old New York Evening Post.



From the jacket of "The Hudson," by Stow Wengenroth

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What Wilson Fought For

WOODROW WILSON: LIFE AND LETTERS. Vol. VIII: Armistice, March 1-*November* 11, 1918. *By Ray Stannard Baker. New York: Doubleday, Doran & Co.* 1939. 626 *pp., with index.* $5.

Reviewed by RAYMOND J. SONTAG

THE official biography of Woodrow Wilson is now complete in eleven volumes. The eight volumes of "Life and Letters" carry the story to the Armistice; "Woodrow Wilson and the World Settlement" was published in 1923. Because it is the last to appear, this volume on the months from March to November 1918 ends on a note of triumph. "Everything for which America fought has been accomplished," Wilson assured the American people. "It will now be our fortunate duty to assist by example, by sober, friendly counsel and by material aid in the establishment of just democracy throughout the world."

The events of 1919 and 1920 need not be fresh in one's mind to make this seem a hollow boast. Indeed, pushing through a Commencement crowd in Princeton this June of 1939, the doubt arises, was anything for which Woodrow Wilson ever fought really accomplished? At one end of Princeton, undergraduate life still centers in the clubs which he sought to destroy in the name of democracy. At the other end of the town the Graduate College rises proudly aloof from the undergraduates with whom Wilson believed graduate students should remain in intimate contact. From failure at Princeton, Wilson was rescued by the governorship of New Jersey. At Trenton he fought to break boss rule; mention of the Hague-Hoffman machine is sufficient to indicate the result of that battle. Then came the presidency and the New Freedom; the monopoly hearings in 1939 are a commentary on the hopes of 1913. Finally, the greatest battle of all, the battle for a new world order, for democracy, self-determination, and a League of Nations. Beneš would not be in Princeton today if everything for which America, and Wilson, fought had been accomplished.

Despite embarrassed eulogies, this is the record which sticks in the popular memory. A people which is willing to scatter monuments to Will Rogers over a continent has yet decently to honor the memory of Woodrow Wilson. The world loves a winner, and it is painfully obvious that Wilson was a loser.

He was a loser just as Erasmus lost in an earlier age of violent readjustment. Like Erasmus, he foresaw and prepared the way for a revolution which, when it came, he was unable to control; like Erasmus, from the most loved and feared of men, he became an object of ridicule almost overnight. Whether, like Erasmus, his fame will in later generations overtop the idols of our day, it is too soon to say; but it is not entirely an act of faith to believe that it will.

Wilson's diagnosis of the sickness of American society, and his cure, can be seen in miniature by a study of his career at Princeton. He saw a college without living contact with the state, and even the nation, which it was created to serve. He saw faculty, undergraduates, and graduate students separated, one from the others. He saw the undergraduates divided by social barriers of which the clubs were the expression. He pointed out that, as things stood, the college was likely to become a parasite on the community, and to earn the opprobrium visited on parasites. He pointed out also that the college could not fruitfully serve American life until it was itself a democracy. The barriers separating student from student, and students from faculty, must be demolished.

Underwood & Underwood

"He foresaw and prepared the way for a revolution which, when it came, he was unable to control"...

Unhesitatingly he began the work of demolition and reconstruction. In the fight which followed he showed the defects of personality which were to handicap his whole career. Thin-skinned himself, his barbed words pierced the thickest skin. Quick to see the connection between details and the problem as a whole, he was impatient with men whose vision was more restricted. Excessively dependent on the affection and consideration of others, he persistently ignored the necessity of adapting a logically workable plan to the weaknesses of illogical men. Above all, he refused to compromise, even when by the sacrifice of a little he could have saved much. Possibly these defects cost him victory. More probably he was defeated because he asked men to sacrifice their long-established interests, prejudices, and traditions before events had made obvious the necessity for sacrifice.

To Wilson—and here his break with nineteenth-century liberalism was sharpest—college, state, and nation were more than descriptive labels for chance aggregations of men; they were living spiritual communities. He saw clearly that the bonds uniting men in these communities could not be merely the prospect of material advantage. The group must demand service, be a compelling, prohibiting, coercive force; but if coercion was not to be tyranny, citizens must be conscious of their membership in, no less than their responsibility to, the community. In the state and the nation, as in the college, that consciousness could be but fitful while real democracy was absent. Therefore he attacked the barriers separating American citizens. In the eyes of his enemies, Wilson stood for a collective society, and wished to destroy the individualism which had made America great. Wilson saw that the kind of individualism prized by earlier liberals was dead. For effective action, men were already mobilized into groups; they were farmers, or industrial workers, or agents of corporate industry, even suffragettes or prohibitionists. The problem was to make these groups the servants, and to prevent them from becoming the masters, of the national will. That problem he tried to solve, and failed.

In the sixteenth century there were men who remained loyal to the humanism of Erasmus throughout the violence of the religious wars, and in the end the very violence of the wars pounded home the lessons which Erasmus had expounded before the storm broke. Just so, the recent history of Europe, and particularly of Germany, has reinforced Wilson's arguments. In the academic field he has already been vindicated by the collapse of higher education in Germany. There, the universities did cut themselves off from the national life in the years before 1933; in German universities the internal barriers were highest. And in Germany the universities became an especial object of hatred and contempt. Undoubtedly fear alone does not explain the changed temper of American academic life, but certainly there does

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exist a new determination both to make our colleges more democratic institutions, and bind them more closely to the service of state and nation.

The recent history of Germany has shown also the weakness of a state, no matter how democratic in form, which refuses to heed the demand for economic democracy, and which hopes to survive by tossing favors to sectional, class, or confessional groups. Conversely, Nazi Germany has shown the loyalty which can be evoked by a state which holds the citizens together, not by gifts, but by the demand for service, even though the promise of economic democracy has not been fulfilled. If we can strip away the veil of hate, we shall see that the determination to smash the barriers separating Germans from each other was possibly the strongest weapon in the hands of the Nazis before 1933, and we shall recognize that if we are to avoid the explosive violence and the hideous excesses of the Nazi revolution, the craving for economic democracy cannot long remain unsatisfied in our own country.

So far events have vindicated Wilson's diagnosis, if not in detail, at least the methods by which he would have cured our ills. In the field of international relations, few would deny the truth of his prophecy that a victor's peace would "leave a sting of resentment, a bitter memory upon which terms of peace would rest, not permanently, but only as upon quicksand;" we know he was, and will be, right in declaring that if America was at war "the spirit of ruthless brutality will enter into the very fibre of our national life, infecting Congress, the courts, the policeman on the beat, the man in the street."

He recognized that nationalism was the most compelling group loyalty of our day, and he saw that in the long run national loyalty must lead to economic democracy. He did not see clearly that, at least temporarily, nationalism could be used by the enemies of democracy to avert social reconstruction. He realized that the rulers of Germany and Austria had sought to escape from domestic discontent by foreign adventures, and that when they took up arms, even to resist aggression, free countries were jeopardizing their liberties. He hoped to end these dangers by the overthrow of autocratic governments and the creation of a League of Nations. These hopes now seem vain. If they do prove vain, his hopes of internal national reconstruction may likewise be thwarted. By his own testimony, war and democracy are enemies.

Raymond J. Sontag is head of the department of history at Princeton.

The Brontës and Their Characters

PATTERN FOR GENIUS. A Story of Branwell Brontë and his Three Sisters, Charlotte, Emily, and Anne. Largely told in their own words. By Edith Ellsworth Kinsley. New York: E. P. Dutton & Co. 1939. 384 *pp., with index.* $3.50.

Reviewed by WILLIAM CLYDE DEVANE

THE author of this narrative of the Brontë family has hit upon a somewhat novel device for making her tale vivid and compelling. The present compilation, she tells us, "can be taken either for fiction or history, as the reader prefers," and the method has been to extract biographical material from the novels, poetry, and letters of the Brontës, and to reassemble the whole in a chronological sequence. That is, the author has taken scenes from the novels and given them to us as biography by means of altering the tense and the phrase where it has been expedient, "and the real names [that is, of the Brontës] of the persons concerned have been substituted for imaginary ones given them in fiction." By this free treatment we gain vividness and verisimilitude, no doubt, and we get clearly differentiated characters in a genuinely moving story, but it is better to think of the product as fiction than as history.

This is not to say that the author has written entirely without fear and without research, but her method seems to me a dangerous one. It is true that the Brontës, and especially Charlotte, liked to write from actual experiences, and liked to draw their characters as much as possible from life. But the method here employed reads scenes from fiction too literally as truth itself, and the whole story is told a bit too much in Charlotte Brontë's terms, since she provides most of the materials. Too little room is left for the fervid imagination of the Brontës and for their artistic right to heighten and emphasize and even create a scene. Then, too, the Brontës, like other writers, draw characteristics from several sources to create a character, and it is surely not legitimate in a biography to change the name of Heathcliff into Branwell and Catherine into Emily without direct authorization.

But though Charlotte supplies the greater portion of the materials, the story is not mainly about her, and, indeed, it stops short before her marriage. The story is chiefly about Emily and Branwell Brontë, the changeless identity of her soul with his in life and death, the words in which she proclaims this identity, and the deeds by which it is ratified. For her conception of this strange and passionate alliance, the author has, of course, gone to the situation superbly delineated in "Wuthering Heights" between Heathcliff and Catherine Earnshaw, a situation unique in fiction. That some such profound and subtle bond existed between Emily and Branwell seems fairly authenticated; that the bond was quite as supernatural and fatal as that binding Heathcliff and Catherine is hardly likely. There are other causes than Branwell's will to explain the early death of Emily Brontë.

If one will be content to read this story as an historical novel, one will be rewarded by the excellently told tale, and frequently delighted by the imaginative insight of the writer. There is room for this kind of pleasure; but scholarship is another matter, and requires a steadier, colder, and more persistent effort.

Anne, Emily, and Charlotte Brontë—detail of a portrait by Branwell Brontë in the National Portrait Gallery.

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The Saturday Review
of Literature

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The Writer's Apprenticeship

MOST of the writers we know taught themselves what they have learned of their art. The methods they pursued were as various as their personalities. Many of the reporters and at least one of the advertising copywriters of our time in Chicago looked with sheep's eyes in the direction of literature. The brown paper-covered package under the reporter's arm was almost certainly an unpublished novel or play.

Some of the lads turned out to be quite fertile. Sherwood Anderson at that time was the author of four unaccepted novels. He used whatever leisure an advertising copywriter had to whip his material into saleable form. Floyd Dell was the first after Anderson to shed his newspaper skin and emerge as a novelist. Francis Hackett, bright boy recently from Dublin, tried novels and turned more surely to biography. Carl Sandburg added to his salary as a reporter by winning prize money and fame with poems. Then he turned to biography. Lucian Cary and Courtney Ryley Cooper stepped directly from the newspaper city room into the short story markets.

All these writers and Ben Hecht, too, who belonged to a slightly younger school of reporters, were honestly interested in writing as a fine art. They tried their talents at various forms. As we recall their earlier struggles, the desire to earn larger sums of money was not their driving motive.

Not all of these men were college graduates. Dell used to boast that he was innocent of formal education. Sandburg, whose "Abraham Lincoln" is one of the finest American biographies, was not able to complete his college course. All of them were prodigious readers and most had had less college work than the minimum accepted for the lowest degree. As truly as is anyone, they were self-taught. Reading, talking, and practice writing were their disciplines.

The methods are different today. We saw a class in journalism at one of the New York colleges that quite filled a large auditorium. Nearly seven hundred men, women, and children were marching toward writing by the Chautauqua or tiger-hunt method. Game was stalked by bushbeaters, captured, skinned, and sometimes exhibited. It was evident from their questions and comments that not all this assemblage were inspired by any deep affection for excellent writing, or ambitious to add to the resources of literature. We suspect that the possibility of earning some of the easy money reputedly paid press agents, script writers, and some of the other stepbrothers and sisters of journalists is the magnet. By those who do neither, writing is esteemed a lighter task than wielding a shovel.

The opportunities to earn money by various types of commercial writing actually have increased enormously during the past quarter of a century. Press agents years ago were half-caste reporters. Now public relations counselors, sons of the same old scalawags, are firmly established as leaders in corporate, governmental, labor union, and social welfare activities; in fact, in nearly every type of human organization that depends in any way upon a friendly public opinion. The radio and the movie industries require the services of thousands of men and women possessing some skill in the use of words. Advertising agencies have grown vastly and they, too, require the services of writers. It is natural that the ambitious young should respond to such invitations.

We don't think, however, that journalism in its self-respecting varieties or literature in any except its meaner forms can effectually be learned in mass trade schools. Of course the best general education available is a great asset to any intending writer as to any other civilized human being. But it scarcely seems worth the effort to go to a trade school to learn the meager craft technique of journalism, and we are persuaded that no institutions exist able to give much competent guidance to the creative writer, beyond the amateur stage.

The externals can be taught in schools or learned individually from books. Most that is known about literary form in writing is available in high-school rhetoric texts. Aristotle covered the subject concisely, if briefly, some time ago. Teachers of literature have been expounding the same doctrine during at least twenty-two hundred years—with no great success. Aristotle was somewhat too compact for easy comprehension, and the school texts generally lack vividness. For those who can't be bothered to learn from Aristotle or the school rhetoricians there are various practical handbooks such as Arthur Sullivant Hoffman's recent "Fiction Writing Self-Taught"* as well as numerous correspondence courses in our more populous universities.

Mr. Hoffman for many years has advised writers who hope to sell their short stories and novels to magazines. His function is that of the coach or trainer. His latest book of advice is aimed at that very considerable group who are practising fiction-writing in private. His counsel is strictly that of the journeyman. Fiction-writing in the view of his book is a trade as definite as that of the plumber or sign-painter, and requires only slightly more imagination, learning, or anything else above the neck. If the amateurs who use his book have the resources of mind and experience and the special qualities essential to successful writing, help can, however, be had from such texts. His picture of the architecture of the short story and of the novel, for that matter, is correct. His methods of self-analysis are sound if they can be applied.

It is of course possible to learn the trade of writing, granted a minimum of capacity, sufficiently well to obtain and to hold jobs that involve the use of words but that have nothing to do with literature. The self-teaching that precedes the writing of a story or novel or play having any claim to be considered literature, is, obviously, a much more profound and searching process than that offered by the schools of journalism or the coaches or the handbooks. This self-criticism that compels the conscientious writer to work and re-work his material, discarding whatever is not relevant to his chosen theme, building his characters to play their necessary roles, throwing away all that does not truly contribute to the fulfilment of his primary intention, is not a light achievement.

We would not suggest that in the process of learning much attention be paid, in the early stages at least, to form. The story told is still the thing and the story is as good only as the materials that go into it. Life in its largest aspects is the great text. The capacity of the writer to feel, to see, to understand, to interpret, and to record in living words is the final measure of the success of anything written. Endowed with such gifts, men and women do teach themselves to write fiction and other varieties of literature. They are seeking other goals than those set to attract students of the easier ways to writing.

WILLIAM L. CHENERY

*FICTION WRITING SELF-TAUGHT. By Arthur Sullivant Hoffman. New York: W. W. Norton & Co. 1939. 224 pp., with index. $1.75.

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Letters to

The MacLeish Appointment

SIR:—I assume that Mr. Canby was trying to clarify the issues in his recent editorial on "Archibald MacLeish and the Library of Congress," but in so doing he has misunderstood the point of view of the librarians who are protesting Mr. MacLeish's appointment, and his editorial therefore adds nothing but more confusion.

In the first place, his conception of what a modern American librarian is and does is antiquated, to say the least. To characterize librarianship as "the technique of book-getting and book-keeping" is simply nonsense and an amazingly ignorant statement. The really successful librarian in this country has always been one who happens to be (to quote your criteria), "an executive, broadly trained, who has demonstrated his scholarship, his ability to organize, and his capacity for representing a great storehouse of intellectual energy."

Those traits are the very ones we librarians want to see in the Librarian of Congress because we know that the position demands them. We as a profession would oppose, most emphatically, the appointment of a mere technician to the position.

Now if Mr. Canby will read the biographical sketch of MacLeish (written by himself) found in "Living Authors," p. 246, and compare the facts listed there with the criteria he has set up, he may understand what we librarians are driving at.

It should be emphasized that this situation is embarrassing to us librarians because it forces us to seem to criticise Mr. MacLeish when most of us have the highest regard for him as a gentleman and a writer, and a great liberal. We like him but we can find nothing in the records that convinces us that he is the man for the leadership of one of the greatest libraries in the world. Do you have any facts that might change our minds?

DR. RALPH E. ELLSWORTH,
Director of Libraries
University of Colorado

Dr. Ellsworth's letter was written before the appearance of our issue of June 24, containing John Chamberlain's article, which pointed out many of Mr. MacLeish's qualifications.

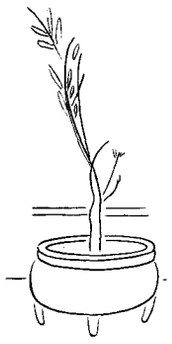
SIR:—I assure P. E. G. Quercus that there is a great deal more to being Librarian of Congress than possession of an ignorance of the Dewey Decimal system. Really, such remarks as this: "ten thousand people can easily be hired who know all about the Dewey Decimals" bring one to the verge of despair!

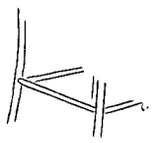
I have followed Mr. MacLeish for years with admiration and interest. I am willing to grant that he is a scholar, that he may be an able executive. I grant that he has imagination. These things, however, do not qualify him to administer a vast and complex organization of whose many functions, of whose technique, of whose policy he knows nothing. The Librarian of Congress must constantly decide points of procedure which shape the policy of the Library. He must arbitrate between departments and between individuals whose problems he understands. He must assure the appointment to his staff of people whose fitness for the position he can judge. Though he may never have to catalog a book or perform other "technical" duties, he should, surely, know something of these things which are the basis of the entire structure for whose administration he is responsible. He must, day after day, evaluate, judge, and act wisely in matters which require specialized experience. Since you do not require these things of Mr. MacLeish, what is it you are thinking of him as doing as Librarian of Congress? Do you wish him simply for a scholarly ornament? How he can be anything else in that position until after years of study and hard experience, I fail to see. Mr. MacLeish's acceptance of the appointment without any doubts or hesitation is simply a sign that he fails to realize the great and special requirements of the task.

We of the library profession are a long-suffering group—we stay quiet and comparatively philosophical under the pressure of thousands of laymen, who, without any experience other than that of having drawn a book out of a library, feel themselves qualified to speak confidently of library organization and policy. If I now seem unduly excited it is because, under Dr. Putnam's administration, the Library of Congress has become our ideal and our chief source of pride, and we are jealous that it shall continue so.

VIOLA I. MAUSETH,
St. Olaf College Library
Northfield, Minn.

In connection with the MacLeish appointment, we quote a short passage from Nicholas Murray Butler's forthcoming autobiography, "Across the Busy Years" (Scribners), relating to the discussions preceding the appointment of a librarian in 1899: "I had taken a very great interest in the Library of Congress, in securing appropriations for the present building and in working out an administrative scheme that would permit it to become a center of enlightenment and scholarship worthy of the nation. To this end it seemed to me important that the annual appropriations for the support of the Library be much increased and that a first-rate librarian be appointed by the President. . . . On the latter point I discussed names with President McKinley at some length and told him that in my judgment what was wanted was a first-rate administrator with a knowledge of men and of books rather than a mere bureaucrat or a mere bibliophile. He agreed to this and asked me to suggest names. . . ."





"I've read everything Pearl Buck has ever written and I *still* can't manage these chopsticks."

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SHORES OF DESTINATION

BY

VINCENT SHEEAN

The following article is in the nature of an epilogue to Vincent Sheean's forthcoming book, "Not Peace but a Sword." It describes the author's voyage home from Europe after the succession of events which his book records.

T[illegible] sue[illegible] day, affront[illegible] the wind and [illegible] against them; but [illegible] wheel to their accustomed co[illegible], and we go on with turbined majesty to the vast solitudes of the ocean. They are solitudes even here, in the main-traveled road of the north Atlantic, on a ship which is filled with passengers and crew, anxious men and women of the millinery trades returning to New York, politicians and diplomatists and business men, ladies and sailors, refugees.

It is the British sea. This is a British ship, and on the two occasions when we pass other ships on the water they are British ships, too. The immense steamer takes to the sea in fair weather or foul with superb confidence, a monarch in his element. Hearts of oak: Britons never will be slaves.

As a matter of fact a good many of them are, and right on this ship, too, but they seem to have adjusted themselves to the position. At least they are not slaves to the foreigner, and the foreigner's submarines are not yet thick in the cold subaqueous depths where centuries have washed the bones of the British sailor. Those are pearls that were his eyes; the whole history of his country rises from the deep water, the salt and fishy depths; it comes storming down the wind, rides the wave, stings in the spray. It was here that they made the Empire, clear-eyed and short-tempered men with no gift for diplomatic language. They were pushed out of an overcrowded island and had nowhere to go except by water, so that the water became their road and the foundation of their house,

[illegible] safe it was be[illegible]nd the men on it. [illegible]em seem to be em[illegible]ow in polishing brass, car[illegible]buckets, making life agreeable [illegible]luxurious for the idle, thoughtful, or anxious passengers who can afford to travel on this ship. Others by the hundred swelter in the jungles of machinery below; and there are hundreds more whose only duty to the sea lies in carrying a tray, sweeping a floor, making a bed. Such a world is afloat here that you can ring a bell and get very nearly anything you are likely to need; you can go shopping, you can get photographed, you can dance or swim or get your hair cut or go through a Turkish bath; there are even books and places where you can sit and read them. Only a very small proportion of the passengers who travel in this way belong to the nation which made the ship and manned it; most travelers are Americans; but there are also refugees from half the countries of Europe. They do not have quite so many bells to ring, as they are in the third class, but they keep cheerful enough: they have escaped from a kind of hell and are going to what they may think (for a while yet) a kind of paradise, and at least they are free. Among them are the bearded and black-capped Jews who can eat only at the orthodox table; but there are young and old of all nations here, dark eyes that will never see Spain again, and children who last played in the Tiergarten in Berlin. There are also half a dozen men of the Lincoln Battalion, returning belatedly to their own country from the fight down there. One of them is a tall Negro boy who left his right leg on the Ebro.

Once they have passed over this sea they will feel safe, probably, and I think with altogether unwarranted optimism. What was all that that went on in Europe? they will say. We are in a new country where all are equal and every man has a chance, a country torn out of the dark wilderness by our collateral ancestors, by people just like us, by refugees.

That is the way their release will affect them, some of them. They have further discoveries to make in America, but all that lies ahead. For the moment they have escaped from the misery which politicians and profiteers have brought upon the old continent, and they are entitled to their interval of cheer b e f o r e they find out that there are politicians and profiteers in America too. As they lean over the rail and look into the blue-and-white ocean, they can calculate with joy the millions upon millions of tons of water that will lie between them and the old continent, water like a rampart, setting off into the past all that was cruelty and despair in the life there. If I went over and told one of them that this was not so; that the seas had shrunk and the air itself contracted; that Europe was everywhere now, and the whole world one place; this they would certainly refuse to accept.

And why not? For the most part we live by means of forgetting death. The breathless young lady in the first class who is simply *entranced* at the Orkney homespuns in the shop, and simply cannot *resist* buying a scarf, and must simply *die* if she doesn't have a cocktail at once—what else is she doing, and she no refugee at all, but a young lady of great privilege and presumable happiness? The ship and all aboard it live by passage, by transit, by putting away the past, by forgetting what has

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receded as well as the final harbor ahead. Between the shores of departure and destination there is time, so much time that cloud after cloud passes over the memory of unhappy things, and it is natural and inevitable to face the winds of the ocean with a great and rising hope.

The woman who eats at the next table is a golf champion. She is going to America to play golf. I have read her name in the newspapers and know by expert testimony that she plays very good golf. I don't think she is much aware of what cargo we carry. I doubt if she notices much beyond the first-class passengers (a few of them) and the stewards. Her conversation is breezy and robust, like her appearance. If she visited the refugees in the third class—as I am sure she will not—she would experience sympathy and some obscure discomfort. I can hear her saying through her teeth: "Poor devils!" Halfway up in the elevator she would forget them, intent as she is upon the problem of what she can eat. Between her regime as an athlete, her regime as a somewhat queasy passenger, and the huge, rude demands of her appetite, she is the prey to unceasing conflict, and the whack with which she sends the little white ball great distances is perhaps, after all, no special talent, but the effect of sheer physical exasperation under a trained control.

We have a general and a newspaper owner, too. The general talks gossip, nothing but gossip, although most of it is about the notable monsters of the day, Hitler, Chamberlain, Mussolini, and the like. He has just heard this or that; he read something the other day; and is it true that—? The newspaper owner is fastidious, thoughtful, uneasy; he is the editor of a Liberal newspaper in London, and these are not the most hospitable times for Liberals. So they come to America—perhaps to reassure themselves, perhaps to assert by their presence that there are still Liberals alive on the other side of this sea of transition.

I sit stretched out in a deck chair and read a book: "Les Grands Cimetières sous la Lune." The Great Cemeteries under the Moon. A terrible tale of fascism on the island of Majorca, by a Catholic, a Royalist, an extreme Conservative. He is disgusted and embittered by the sheer indecency of the fascist triumph he records, even though its proclaimed ideas are closely related to those he has adopted as his own. The white wall of the cemetery under the moon, with the dark splotches that lie along its base, the body and blood of Spain. . . .

The passengers go by on the deck, taking their exercise: twice around is a mile. The Czechoslovak diplomat, explaining his own downfall with eager emphasis, has fallen into the toils of a lady from New York who does not exactly follow all his discourse, but finds it very interesting. She will give a wondrously garbled version of it at dinners for at least a week after she gets home again. Prague and the Ebro have receded, receded; time and the sea have covered them; men and things lie submerged; of their bones are coral made. But in this lull, this swift trajectory over the sunny water, when hope seems altogether to have vanquished memory, there is a gathering-together of forces; and I am not sure whether that sound was the creaking of the boards on the deck of the ship or the flexing of muscles, thousands of muscles, down below where the workers feed the fire. The ship is forced on over the blue sea, and in five days we do what it took another age three months to accomplish: cross to the New World. Men and machines have so contracted space that this ocean itself no longer divides the hemispheres. It is, rather, a path for the storm that is coming, and those who have fled from the storm once will only have to face it in another place.

If it comes now who will ride it out? The seasick passengers? No: those who tend the engines, watch the sea and sky, feed the fires.

Valley Forge

CONCEIVED IN LIBERTY. By Howard Fast. New York: Simon & Schuster. 1939. 389 *pp.* $2.50.

Reviewed by STEPHEN VINCENT BENÉT

BY the time it was on the way to Valley Forge, the Fourth New York Regiment of the Continental Army had dwindled from three hundred men to nine. Allen Hale was one of the nine, a youngster who tried to think back to the time when he had had a reason for enlisting, but could not quite manage it. This book is his story and the story of his friends and their women, during the hideous winter of suffering that was to follow—a story of death and disease, of sullen bad-feeling between officers and men, of hopelessness, confusion, and pain—till, at last, von Steuben comes to lick the ragged army into some sort of shape, and, with Spring, there is a chance of going on, for men too weary to care. It is a grim story, and Mr. Fast has concentrated upon the grimmest side of it. He gives us the stinking encampment and the wretched men. Allen Hale and his friends make a hopeless attempt to desert and get back to the Mohawk Valley. They are caught; Bess, the Virginia girl, is shot down by Allan McLane's men; Kenton Brenner, the best man among them, is hanged for high treason, the others whipped. Yet, in the end, at Monmouth, the wretched survivors prove their right to exist, and something beyond their comprehension begins to be made.

Pinchot

Howard Fast

Such is the bare outline of Mr. Fast's story, and no one who has looked at the record can quarrel legitimately with his facts. Yet, in his fierce desire to be realistic at all costs, he has, somehow, created a nightmare rather than a novel. Perhaps part of it is due to the curiously impressionistic quality of his prose, which wanders between the past and present tenses for no discernible good reason and loses itself, now and then, in extremely unrealistic dialogue and description. Part of the time the characters talk like privates in the A.E.F., part of the time like characters in an early Synge play. And, in spite of Mr. Fast's insistence on the mud and the blood, the dirt and the hunger, even these things, in time, come to lack reality. It may be that Mr. Fast wished it so, and wished to give the entire book the quality of a fevered dream. If so, he has succeeded in great measure—but not in convincing us of the reality of that dream to his characters.

Of the few portraits of officers included, Hamilton's is the most successful. Von Steuben's is interesting, if sentimentalized. In drawing Washington, Mr. Fast has tried so hard to get away from the conventional classic statue that he has produced something almost completely unrecognizable. Washington could and did blaze with anger, but he was hardly the hysterical actor that Mr. Fast has pictured. Nevertheless, and in spite of its hectic overwriting, "Conceived in Liberty" has points. It is an honest attempt to tell a great story from the reverse of the conventional point of view. It may give some people an inkling of the facts behind heroic inscriptions. And Mr. Fast will bear watching, as soon as he gets the lightning-bugs out of his style.

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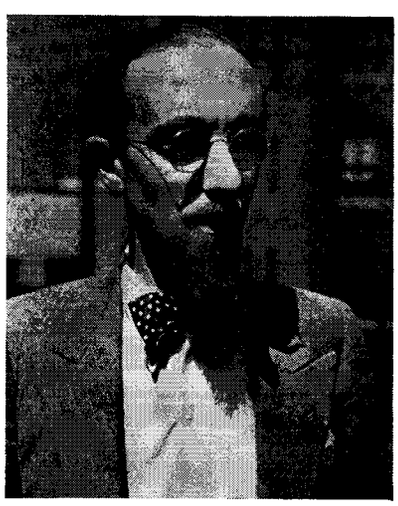
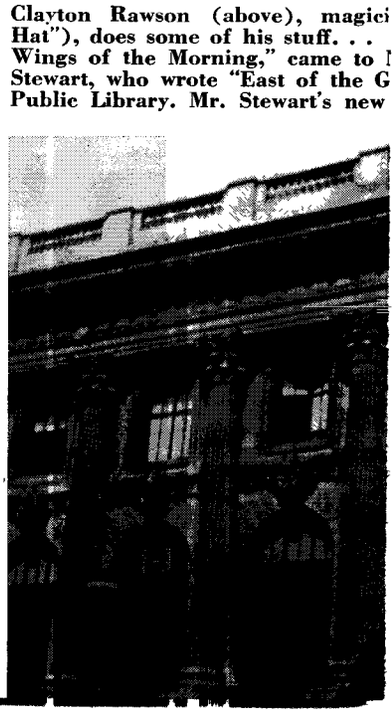
Sylvia Townsend Warner (above), in New York for the recent League of American Writers' Congress, has dinner with Tom Mooney and Dr. Eduard Benes. The author of "Lolly Willowes" is here for the summer. . . . Norman Bel Geddes (left), designer of the General Motors Futurama and author of the forthcoming "Magic Highways," with his models of the car of tomorrow.

Recent visitor from England: Nevil Shute (above), author of "Ordeal." . . . (Above, right) Ben Hecht, of Chicago and Hollywood, was in New York for the publication of his "Book of Miracles." . . . (Below) Adet, Anor, and Meimei, who wrote of their father, Lin Yutang, in their book called "Our Family," have a game of Chinese checkers at the Lins' New York apartment.

Clayton Rawson (above), magici
Hat"), does some of his stuff. . .
Wings of the Morning," came to
Stewart, who wrote "East of the G
Public Library. Mr. Stewart's new





News Pictures by Robert Disraeli

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Distorted Mirror of a Brave Old World

OLD GODS FALLING. By Malcolm Elwin. New York: The Macmillan Company. 1939. 412 *pp., with index.* $3.50.

Reviewed by ERNEST BOYD

MR. ELWIN offers in this book a survey of popular English literature between 1887 and 1914. It is his contention that the period was dominated by Humbug, Prudery, and Respectability, that writers who did not compromise with the conventions had little chance of success in an age that worshipped Rider Haggard, Hall Caine, Conan Doyle, Marie Corelli, and Mrs. Humphry Ward. Any person old enough to remember the vogue of these writers will be amazed and amused to find a critic who has, apparently, read and reread this piffle and who can work up a vast amount of indignation about the subject. Since he is protesting against the Victorian conventions, one might expect him to appreciate those who fought against those conventions. Instead of which, he devotes a sixty-page account of George Moore to proving that Moore's love affairs were not authentic and that he was a cowardly *poseur* who could not write and therefore failed to emancipate the English novel from the thralldom of Victorianism. His attack on Moore amounts almost to a personal vendetta and completely misrepresents the man, his work, and his achievement in upsetting precisely those standards against which Mr. Elwin is protesting. The affectations of Moore, the poses of his old age, the fact that he made money out of issuing limited editions, have nothing to do with the case. Moore's novels were so popular that they circulated in cheap sixpenny reprints. Mr. Elwin seems to believe that they were mostly flops and were remaindered, until he hit upon the device of publishing them in expensive limited editions.

Mr. Elwin gives thirty-three consecutive pages to Arnold Bennett and twenty-seven to Galsworthy, but names like Bernard Shaw and Joseph Conrad receive only passing mention. If Mr. Elwin had confined himself to fiction, his indifference to Conrad would still be astounding, but how a book dealing with Victorian humbug and not restricted to fiction, could give no adequate account of Shaw's dynamic influence on the period in question, I leave to Mr. Elwin to explain. If Sir John Squire is deserving of mention as an editor and critic, then Shaw's role as an emancipator deserves at least a chapter. Mr. Elwin really intended, so far as I can make out, to write about novelists, so he has nothing to say about Synge or Yeats or the repertory theater movement in breaking down Victorian traditions. But he departs from his plan by discussing critics like Gosse and Saintsbury, and giving Richard Le Gallienne his due as one of the most alert reviewers of the nineties. Churton Collins, who disposed of the pretensions of Gosse and Saintsbury, might be entitled, one would suppose, to a word of appreciation, but Mr. Elwin, having mentioned him, quotes an unpleasant epithet about him. He is determined to be the first to debunk the Victorians. Those who really did so at the time when it was necessary get scant praise from Mr. Elwin.

"The literary history, not only of the nineties, but of the whole era between 1887 and 1914, is the story of art's struggle against Humbug." Such is Mr. Elwin's thesis. He does not prove it, because any period can be similarly misrepresented by selecting best-selling authors and log-rolling critics. The obvious fact is that the period in question was one of the most interesting in English literature. It was a quarter of a century or so during which every vital influence in pre-war Europe was flourishing; it was the last gleam of the civilization which died in the four years devoted to making the world safe for gangsters. It cannot be recalled in terms of its obvious trivialities and absurdities. No child in the nineties was under any illusion that Shaw and Ibsen were not so important as Rider Haggard and Hall Caine. The latter made more money—that's all. You could buy Moore and Meredith in cheap reprints for sixpence, and Ibsen's plays were obtainable for a quarter. Mr. Elwin arouses pleasant memories and does justice to men who deserve to be remembered, Henley, Whibley, Le Gallienne, but this book is somehow a distorted mirror of a brave old world.

ın and mystery author ("Death from a Top Edward S. Hyams (left), British author of "The New York, found its tempo slow. . . . George R. iants," here from California, visits the New York novel, "Doctor's Oral," is coming in September.

Brilliant Surfaces

YESTERDAY'S DREAMS. By Ruth Feiner. Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott Co. 1939. 366 *pp.* $2.50.

Reviewed by N. L. ROTHMAN

THE workmanship that has gone into this novel is more than sound; it is expert. Let us consider its plan. Two boys are born to two families of sharply opposed social position, upon the same night. One is Johann Pirelli, son of an actor who plays repertory along the road in Germany. The other is Wilhelm von Rautten, heir to a baronial estate. Their births are linked by time and by the fact that the doctor has been called away from the bedside of Frau Pirelli to attend the Baroness. As they grow up in their separate worlds, one among theatrical folk, the other in exalted society, we are given alternate views of two social milieus; and this, more than anything else, is the measure of Miss Feiner's talents. Using a very sure ear for characteristic dialogue, and a fine visual sense to conjure up character after character with prolific ease, she has presented these two worlds in their most human terms, at their most expressive. The tone is always bright, the pace swift. As the story unfolds we see the two worlds meeting, to overlap at crucial points. Lines shoot between them to join the lives of Pirelli and von Rautten, so that at last the whole structure of the novel tightens, closes in upon a final single drama.

Structure, then, character, color—these are the elements of Miss Feiner's engrossing story. If "Yesterday's Dreams" is engrossing without being important in any larger sense, it is because she has attempted nothing larger. She has easy control of everything necessary to build a large-scale historical novel, but she has thus far contented herself with brilliant and engaging surfaces. Here, for instance, in a story running from about 1880 to present times, she has made no use of history or politics. The war is mentioned, hardly more than that, and the von Rauttens are dispossessed in some mysterious social upheaval, but no sense of the meaning and direction of events emerges. The novel is focussed upon Pirelli and von Rautten as though their fortunes are wholly dependent upon their personalities, and they do in fact develop as though there were no war, no upheaval, no force but their own. It is the hero theory of history applied to fiction, and in such capable hands it produces a novel of romantic force. Miss Feiner may possibly penetrate deeper, to the roots of history, perhaps in her next book, and then we shall have a book of large dimensions.

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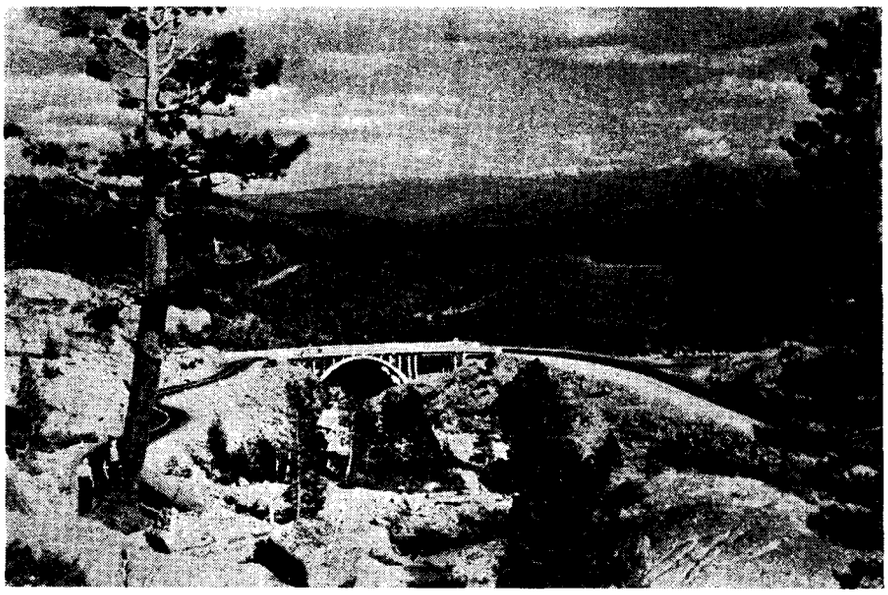

Donner Lake, from Donner Pass

Seeing the Golden State

ROMANTIC CITIES OF CALIFORNIA. By Hildegard Hawthorne. Illustrated by E. H. Suydam. New York: D. Appleton-Century Co. 1939. 456 *pp., with index.* $6.

CALIFORNIA, A GUIDE TO THE GOLDEN STATE. Compiled and written by the Federal Writers' Project of the WPA. (American Guide Series). New York: Hastings House. 1939. 713 *pp., with index.* $2.50.

Reviewed by GEORGE R. STEWART

YOU will want one or both of these books to take along on your trip to the San Francisco fair. Or else you will want them as gifts for someone who is going. But save room in the suitcase, for they are big, heavy volumes.

"Romantic Cities" is not a guide-book in the more limited sense, but rather a general book presenting California historically and descriptively. By being limited to the cities, it omits some of the famous spots such as Yosemite, but it includes thirty-four cities in its list and by describing also their environs it really covers the state. The word "Romantic" might well have been omitted from the title, for at least several of the cities described *(honoris causa* I refrain from naming them) are far from being romantic in any sense of the word. It is easy to imagine a tourist in California keeping this volume handy, and by reading its descriptive sections finding that he could get along without any other guide-book. A resident of California might well keep the volume on his desk for pleasant refreshment of memory and extension of knowledge. Written by a woman, the book generally preserves an agreeably feminine point of view.

Not so the WPA "Guide." It maintains throughout, a distinctly masculine tone. Contrast, for instance, the delicately lined drawings of Mr. Suydam with the strongly realistic and modern photographs of the "Guide"—migrant laborers, oil tanks, and caterpillar trucks. The "Guide" is in three parts—a historical and descriptive introduction, a section treating of seventeen urban centers, and a section describing some thirty tours for the automobilist. The "Guide" seems to have been compiled in the great tradition of Baedeker. Forearmed with it, the careful traveler may approach any spot with the assurance that he probably knows more about it than the local inhabitants know. How pleasant then to be able to argue down, for instance, a street-car conductor in Fresno with such words as: "Your basic fare is 7¢, 'short haul' fare 5¢ in business districts, tokens 3 for 20¢, free transfers." Besides being a guide-book for the visitor, the volume will serve as an excellent reference book for the resident; it contains more detailed, up-to-date information about the state than can be obtained elsewhere between two covers.

An attractive feature of both books is the absence of the old "praise everything" state of mind about California. The "Guide" speaks its mind on occasions, and Miss Hawthorne gets in for instance, a word of condemnation against Berkeley's atrocious skyscraper with its dominating and insulting electric advertisement.

George R. Stewart is the author of "East of the Giants," a historical novel of California *(see page 12.)*

Changing Standards

(Continued from page 4)

ferry-boat wheel. The author has to get rid of women who are going to pieces, which is what men have been doing for a long time with such women in real life. And while we should know about this and appreciate the fact, we cannot dwell on it forever. Besides, it is obvious that there are a great many fine women in the world, straightforward girls who are making something out of their lives, even though they may have a hard time doing it.

Readers are beginning to want to be reminded of this in fiction or else they will read something other than fiction. Many of the Faulkner readers of a few years ago are now absorbed in Pierre van Paassen's "Days of Our Years." They are reading Edna Ferber's autobiography. Millions have read with pleasure a story about a little boy and a fawn.

That is the handwriting on the fiction wall. It is not that readers are shocked by any absence of morals in fiction. But it is, more probably, that as the public is indifferent to or eager for moral strength, the result must appear in fiction. The present mood of the world is serious. It is afraid of degeneration. It is pulling back from decay.

"The Grapes of Wrath" and "The Wild Palms" came out within hailing distance of each other and may rub jackets on a library table. "The Wild Palms" seems slightly dated. "The Grapes of Wrath" is the new modern accent. It will say anything that is true and it will close its eyes to nothing that is to be seen, but this has a social cause and a social scope. There is plenty of sex in the story. But it is shown as it is, withered with age, youthfully urgent, careless, tied up with pleasure and inconvenience and pain and starvation. The heroine—and one of the finest of many years—is Ma in the full quality of her moral strength.

If realistic fiction is to hold its readers today, it must have as much of a moral pattern as has sound contemporary biography. This implies an adherence to no single rule of conduct, nor to a definite set of morals. Fiction is not propaganda. But it does mean that in so far as there is effort in the world toward creation of a better society and the preservation of the spiritual quality in life, fiction must take cognizance of these things or lose its public.

All this is a long way around Robin Hood's barn to say that fiction is no more devoid of moral standards than is life. And at the moment it needs heroes and heroines in the literal sense quite as much as the world does. Perhaps a few more are on the way.

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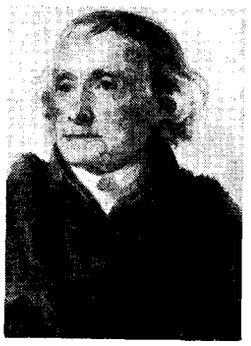
What Jefferson Thought

DEMOCRACY. By Thomas Jefferson. Selected and arranged with an Introduction by Saul K. Padover. New York: Appleton-Century Co. 1939. 291 *pp. with index.* $2.50.

Reviewed by ALLAN NEVINS

JEFFERSON'S writings are unfortunately much more talked about than read. His ideas, like Hamilton's, have long reached even the intelligent public at second or third hand. Ordinary men and students, frightened by the ten heavy volumes of the Paul Leicester Ford edition of the Writings, or the twenty volumes of the Memorial edition, turn from them to such expositors as Parrington, Merriam, or W. P. Trent. It is too bad, for every one should be acquainted with the Ana or autobiographical fragments, the Notes on Virginia, and the best letters; and nearly everybody would find them as entertaining as they are instructive. What Jefferson has needed are a few good one-volume selections from his best productions, such as were long ago devoted to Benjamin Franklin. A few years ago James Truslow Adams made a beginning with a small volume—its only fault its extreme brevity—of excerpts from the writings, designed to show the whole range of Jefferson's ideas. Dr. Padover now provides a longer volume, nearly three hundred pages, devoted entirely to the political thought of the third President, and arranged primarily to illustrate his conception of democracy. The book is expert, skillfully arranged, logical, and (not its least merit) interesting.

Jefferson's conception of democracy was broad, humane, and even to the eye of the twentieth century advanced. It was faulty, as the American people decided in his own time, in one great respect. He did not realize, as Hamilton realized, that liberty and democracy are bound to suffer if they do not have a strong government to protect them. A powerful central government, fortunately for the American democracy, was set up despite Jefferson and in defiance of his wishes; and when he became President he found that his practices had to reverse many of his most cherished theories. He never quite grasped the fact that liberty and equality (the one an individualistic idea, the other a social idea) are often opponents, and that it is the great problem of democracy to reconcile them. But if he was too idealistic and tender-minded in his thinking about democracy, too deficient in tough practical realism, he nevertheless set up a number of magnificent principles for the republic's guidance. Some of them, particularly his ideas of natural rights, he drew from Locke and Harrington; some—not so many—from French thinkers; others he hammered out for himself. What were they? The full answer to this question is set forth succinctly in Dr. Padover's neatly arranged volume; and readers will be astonished at the symmetry and completeness of Jefferson's edifice.



Jefferson, from a portrait by Sully

They will profit, too, as they turn these pages, by the varied comments he throws forth on all sorts of questions incidentally connected with democracy and its workings. Some of them are quaint enough—his denunciation of Presbyterians, for example, and his caustic views as to banks and banknotes. Some few are now seen to have been mistaken—his ideas as to the destructive influence of urbanization upon democracy. Many of them, from his opinions upon a free press to his skepticism about the supposed "natural inferiority" of Negroes, are thoroughly sound. And not a few, when read in the light of the day's news, have a remarkably modern ring: his attacks upon European savagery, his recommendation of a severance of relations or boycott in answer to an international aggressor, his warm plea for tolerance to the Jews. Altogether, Jefferson upon democracy is pungent, vigorous, and alive as well as inspiring. Dr. Padover's book will prove a stimulating surprise to those who think that Jefferson somehow belongs to the eighteenth century.

On the Edge

ANNE MINTON'S LIFE. By Myron Brinig. New York: Farrar & Rinehart. 1939. 279 *pp.* $2.50.

Reviewed by BEN RAY REDMAN

A YEAR or so ago, a young man stepped out on the window ledge of a New York hotel, many stories above the street, and perched there for hours while he debated whether or not to commit suicide. His friends within the room, the police and fire departments, were all helpless. Huge crowds gathered below, photographers had a Roman holiday, and for a few hours the eyes of an entire nation were fastened upon this hitherto obscure human being who had emerged from the anonymous mass to win the attention of his fellows only by the manner of his leaving them. Would he jump? Wouldn't he jump? Books were made, while the mob soul revealed itself in all its ugliness. Finally he did jump, crashed through the canopy of the hotel's marquee, and struck the pavement with a force that made pulp of brains and bones and blood and muscles.

This incident must have captured Myron Brinig's imagination, for he has used it as the pattern of his latest novel. He has moved the scene from New York City to Beverly Hills, and his protagonist is a young woman, Anne Minton, instead of a young man; but the mechanics of his story are those that were furnished him by the real young man on the Gotham window ledge. Detail after detail of the actual episode has been carried over into fiction: the efforts of those who would prevent the tragedy; the reactions of the crowd; even the final crash.

Mr. Brinig has sought to fill this pattern as a novelist should, and to give it a meaning. He would show us what went on in Anne Minton's mind, and the influence of her act upon several groups of characters not otherwise related. In her dying, she affected other lives profoundly. But for her, Mary might not have married Frank, Sylvia and Edgar might not have come together, and the Lanes might not have had their baby. Mr. Brinig would make Anne incarnate the eternal struggle between life and death, and stand as a symbol for mankind poised perilously on ledges everywhere. He would have her, in her dying, give a meaning to life.

It is an interesting pattern and an interesting attempt. But the trouble is that Anne herself is not made at all interesting, and the other characters—with the exception of Mendelbaum, who might pass in a stock company version of one of Robert Nathan's novels—are flat, colorless, and contrived. Mr. Brinig's writing in this case may or may not have been hasty, but it is certainly undistinguished. And the author suffers from the fact that the incident upon which his story is based is still so fresh in our memories. The recollection of fact keeps interfering with what should be the illusion of fiction.

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. . . 30-Foot Boat Quits Riviera for Tahiti

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CANNES, France, June 20.— . . . A Polynesian catamaran, thirty-two feet long, twenty in the beam and with a draught of three feet eight inches, set sail from here last night for Tahiti . . . The Kaimiloa, Polynesian for "wind of heaven," carries two masts with Chinese lugsails . . .

In the news again . . .

THE KAIMILOA

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PUTNAM'S

The A. L. A. Convention

BY CHRISTOPHER STULL

OBSERVERS of the sixty-first annual conference of the American Library Association convening in San Francisco last week could not but be impressed by outgoing President Milton J. Ferguson's achievement in bringing together so many ranking members of the literary profession. Association members were able to meet and talk to writers, publishers, and printers, as well as many others connected with the book business in one way or another.

At meetings and general sessions the librarians heard Stanley M. Rinehart, Jr., of Farrar and Rinehart, speak on some of the problems confronting the publisher; Walter Wanger of Walter Wanger Productions, Hollywood, make an appeal for freedom of motion pictures similar to freedom of the press; and Elizabeth Page, author of "The Tree of Liberty," describe the four years of library research which went into the writing of her novel. Some of the other speakers were Rachel Field, Ruth Comfort Mitchell, Herbert I. Priestley, Ruth Eleanor McKee, and Lee Shippey. Demonstrations of educational radio broadcasts were staged by Joseph Henry Jackson of the Bookman's Notebook, Hale S. Sparks, the "University Explorer," Nell Steinmetz of the Children's Book Program of Los Angeles, and Blevins Davis, Director of Educational Drama, NBC, New York.

A storm arose over the collection which was once housed in "six hair trunks and a map case," and has since become the greatest library in the world, when members of the Association protested to the government against the recent appointment of Archibald MacLeish as Librarian of Congress. The protest commended MacLeish's literary ability, in no way criticized him, but based opposition entirely on his lack of professional training. The next day word came that the Senate Library Committee had recommended approval of his nomination and the Association stated that the opposition would be carried further. On Thursday, however, a Senate announcement indicated that approval of the MacLeish appointment had been delayed to allow further consideration of the arguments of opposing factions.

At the second general session Dr. Herbert Putnam, retiring Librarian of Congress, was named recipient of the Lippincott award for distinguished service in the library field, and Dean Louis Round Wilson, of the Graduate Library School of the University of Chicago, of the White award for his "Geography of Reading." At a meeting of the Children's Section Tuesday Elizabeth Enright received the Newbery award for the most distinguished contribution to children's literature published last year for her "Thimble Summer." At the same time Thomas Handforth, who spoke on the growth of his interest in Oriental art, received the Caldecott award for his "Mei Li." Editor Frederic Melcher of *Publishers' Weekly,* who donates both medals and originated the ideas of the awards, made the presentations. Another honor accorded by the Association this year was the presentation of an honorary membership to John H. Finley, editor emeritus of the *New York Times.*

The making of books, from writer through publisher to printer, occupied the attention of the delegates at most of the meetings. A particularly timely note was introduced through the general concern for the preservation of books by democracies and the inalienable right of readers and authors to find all shades of opinion expressed in the books on their library shelves. And integrated with this aspect of literature was the problem discussed at the Work with the Foreign Born Round Table, the problem of the new type of immigrant—educated, intellectual—entering the U. S. and what we have to offer him through our libraries.

Particular attention was given to international relations. Roisin Walsh, Librarian of the Public Library of Dublin, Eire, spoke on the Irish collection of folklore and the community of interests between Eire and the United States. The Latin-American Committee, which some weeks ago received $30,000 from the Rockefeller Foundation for the furtherance of coöperation between the libraries of Latin-America and the United States, held an exhibit of books and heard talks by Latin-American librarians and government representatives.

In this connection, Lyle H. Wright of the Huntington Library spoke on propaganda in literature. Jan Masaryk, former minister to England from Czechoslovakia, spoke by overseas radio from London to groups at the Friends of the Library luncheon, expressing the hope that America would "safeguard the thousands of book sanctuaries" in its care. And "The Library's Bill of Rights" was introduced by Ernestine Rose, branch Librarian of the New York Public Library, at a meeting of the Council. The Bill affirms the right of libraries to select books with-

SOLUTION OF LAST WEEK'S DOUBLE-CROSTIC (No. 274)

WALT WHITMAN:
"LEAVES OF GRASS"

Centre of equal daughters, equal sons,
All, all alike, endeared, . . . young or old,
Strong, ample, fair, enduring, capable, rich,
Perennial with the Earth, with Freedom, Law and Love,
A grand, sane, towering, seated Mother,
Chaired in the adamant of Time.

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out consideration for the "race, nationality, or the political or religious views of the writers," to keep on their shelves books which represent all sides of controversial questions, and to throw open their assembly rooms to "all groups in the community regardless of their beliefs or affiliations."

The fourth general session brought the convention to a close with an address by President-elect Ralph Munn and the presentation of new officers.

Christopher Stull is on the staff of the San Francisco Chronicle.

Mystic Bluestocking

THE LADY OF THE HOLY ALLIANCE. By Ernest John Knapton. New York: Columbia University Press. 1939. *262 pp., with index.* $5.

Reviewed by GARRETT MATTINGLY

JULIE DE KRUDENER is chiefly remembered as the white-haired mystic who was supposed to exercise a profound spiritual influence upon Czar Alexander I, just as that dreamy young man was adumbrating the Holy Alliance. Before she was linked with that preposterous document, Julie had traveled a long way, mostly in a more mundane guise, as a less holy inspiration. Daughter of a noble Baltic family, married, at eighteen, to a neighbor, the Baron von Krüdener, she accompanied him on diplomatic missions to Venice and Copenhagen before she left him to follow the life of an emancipated bluestocking, rivaling (at least in her own estimation) Madame de Staël and Madame Récamier, just failing to captivate famous lovers, or captivating lovers who just failed to become famous, and winning, as the result of assiduous intrigue, brief celebrity as the authoress of a sentimental novel, "Valerie." The malicious hinted that her religious conversion had waited on the fading of her charms, but there seems to be no doubt that Julie abandoned herself to German chiliastic mysticism with the same fervor and romantic sensibility with which she had swum with other currents of her age, and with as much sincerity.

This biography recounts authoritatively Julie's restless life, keeping an even balance between sympathy and justice, but wisely relies for its chief interest on the analysis of those various intellectual climates to which she successively succumbed. The chapters on the provincial culture of Riga in the later eighteenth century and on the religious fanatics and charlatans of southern Germany in the Napoleonic period seem particularly fresh and illuminating. Most people can comprehend the temper of a past age better from one intelligently selected and presented concrete instance than from volumes of generalization. They will welcome this story of a woman whose life swayed so freely in the rising tides of European romanticism.

Ingenious Mr. Peale

THE ARTIST OF THE REVOLUTION: THE EARLY LIFE OF CHARLES WILLSON PEALE. By Charles Coleman Sellers. Hebron, Conn.: Feather & Good. 1939. $7.50.

Reviewed by OLIVER LARKIN

IN a period when many Americans still believed that "the Plow-Man that raiseth Grain is more serviceable to Mankind, than the Painter who draws only to please the Eye," Charles Willson Peale dared to prophesy that the arts "will here find patronage, and an Asylum, when oppression and tyranny shall perhaps banish them from the seats where they now flourish." In an age still theocratic, Peale hissed a Philadelphia Minister for including King George in the Litany, called Tom Paine his friend, and read Montesquieu and the love poems of Ovid. Although the limner of Peale's day was, in the phrase of Trumbull, "necessarily dependent upon the protection of the rich and great," this Furious Whig championed a republic based on the direct expression of the popular will, lost the friendship and the patronage of conservative merchant-profiteers, and after the battle dryly conceded that he had "rather more attended to make my Country than myself Independent." While Copley, safe in England, kept aloof from the Revolution, Peale captained ragged Continentals under Washington, "equipped," as his biographer remarks, "for painting in miniature and fighting in the large," and executed, between skirmishes, portraits of Washington and his associates which were to be, in Peale's ambition, a National Gallery of Revolutionary America.

When, in 1780, the artist "laid politicks aside and persued the Brush," he had more than justified Benjamin West's reference to "that ingenious young Mr. Peale." He had been a saddler, a coach-maker, a silversmith. He had repaired watches and clocks, made plaster casts, manufactured false teeth, produced mezzotints, designed and built transparencies to celebrate the triumphs of the Revolution. Peale clothed his soldiers' feet with shoes of his own making, built for himself a xylophone and a "barel Organ," mastered the craft of taxidermy, invented a machine for giving rectal injections, and opened the first museum of natural history in America.

Mr. Sellers has published the first biography of this homespun Leonardo. He takes Peale to his forty-ninth year and leaves the remaining thirty-seven for treatment in a second volume. By means of Peale's unpublished autobiography and the supplementary self-revelation to be found in the artist's diaries, his letter books, and other family papers, clarity and conviction emerge from what might have been, in less sympathetic hands, a sprawling and contradictory assemblage of facts. Mr. Sellers has indeed so intimately identified himself with the "mild, benevolent, and good man" of whom he writes, that one can believe Charles Willson Peale, reborn, is repeating his life's story in terms which the reader of today can understand, and presenting evidence by means of which a far less grudging estimate of the painter can now be formed than is to be found in the pages of that Yankee Vasari, William Dunlap.

When American art, and its relation to the political, social, and artistic development of America secure the scholarly attention they have so long deserved but so seldom received, "The Artist of the Revolution" will be required reading.

Oliver Larkin is on the faculty of art at Smith College.

AMERICAN FOLK PLAYS

Edited by FREDERICK H. KOCH

Foreword by ARCHIBALD HENDERSON

The founder of the famous Carolina Playmakers presents twenty one-act plays—eighteen of the American scene, one each from Canada and Mexico. Here are outstanding examples of American regional literature, historic, folk and contemporary. Professor Koch in his extensive introduction gives a detailed account of his ideals and methods of teaching. Illustrated. $4.00

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Mayor Maverick on the Constitution

IN BLOOD AND INK. By Maury Maverick. New York: Modern Age Books. 1939. 282 *pp., with index. Paper,* 75 *cents. (Starling Press: cloth,* $2.50)

Reviewed by DUNCAN AIKMAN

MAYOR MAVERICK of San Antonio, whom practically everybody remembers as the most titillatingly sententious Congressman since Randolph of Roanoke, here propounds a thesis. It is: The Constitution of the United States is much more alive than the document you find at the tail end of the school histories.

A lot of blood went into its making besides the ink that was used to write it and interpret it and circumscribe its effectiveness. Hundreds of ideas feed it with vitamins, some of them dating back to the old Anglo-Saxon tribes, some so new in their implications of where American democracy is going that they can hardly yet be described as hatched. Some of them, like the Declaration of Independence slogan, "life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness" have never been attached to the Constitution in the formal literary sense. Others, like the concept of a functioning economic democracy, have not, in a strictly coherent way, even been written down.

But, along with the things that make sense in the Magna Carta, the Declaration, the Articles of Confederation, the Northwest Territory Ordinance of 1787, and the more forward-looking Supreme Court decisions, all sound democratic ideas of American origin or usage belong to what Mayor Maverick calls "the living Constitution." For a practical politician, he is almost mystical about it. Now and then he talks of the Constitution as "the Law of the Land" a good deal as if it had sprung magically out of the earth, like a volcano or a grasshopper.

Apart from these poetics, the mayor keeps his eye on realities. What he wants is to have us put "the living Constitution" to work and quit paying ritual adorations to the one that the lawyers and most of the Supreme Court majorities have been trying to guarantee since the start of the Republic as being one hundred per cent ink.

This, Mr. Maverick insists, is easier than we think. We can halt the supreme justices in their wicked work of ham-stringing democratic progress and economic justice any time it pleases us: by legally restricting their range of jurisdiction, for instance, or by packing the court, or merely by threatening to do these shocking things.

Suppose, he intimates, the Dred Scott decision had been warded off by scaring Chief Justice Taney as Mr. Roosevelt scared the "nine old men" in 1937? Or Chief Justice Waite in his recognition of corporations as "persons" under the "due process of law" clause of the fourteenth amendment?

"The people were always in a position to get control of the government," he says in one place, "if they had known what to do and had taken the trouble to do it." According to the Maverick thesis, they still are. With a little rational political effort, they can produce a life in which all Americans can "talk, pray, think as we please —and eat regular."

Along with much picturesque autobiographical material, a good deal of this ground was covered in "A Maverick American" two years ago. The present book is livelier than most review lessons, but it would go better with a little more Maverick sauce.

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The Native Theater

AMERICAN FOLK PLAYS. Edited by Frederick H. Koch. New York: D. Appleton-Century Co. 1939. 592 *pp.* $4.

Reviewed by STEPHEN VINCENT BENÉT

THIS book marks twenty years of the Playmakers' Theater at Chapel Hill and twenty years, as well, of Professor Koch's indefatigable efforts in the cause of American folk-drama. It is easy to say to any literary aspirant, "Write about the things you know about;" it is a good deal harder to show him how to go about it. But Professor Koch has been singularly successful—the proof of it is in this book. Here are twenty-one one-act plays, ranging from Canada to Mexico, and all across the length and breadth of the United States. Few if any of them are by names well-known to the Broadway stage, but all of them are distinguished by one thing —sincerity of intent. Each playmaker has honestly tried to get to grips with some one aspect of American life. It may be Davy Crockett or a farm woman of the North Dakota prairies—it may be a cowboy comedy or an Oklahoma tragedy—the same desire to work with native materials and make something of them is obvious in them all. It is an interesting and, in many respects, a remarkable achievement.

The plays themselves are workable and workmanlike. A few of them, "Funeral Flowers for the Bride," "The Red Velvet Coat," "Git up and Bar the Door," are better than that. But all of them should interest and stimulate little-theater groups throughout the country. They show what can be done—and if they also, in one sense, show its limits, that is only to be expected. For the truism, unfortunately, holds that great plays are written by great dramatists—and you can be as honest as the daylight and yet not write greatly. These are good plays and honest plays, but it is hard to feel that any one of the contributors to the present volume is a potential Paul Green or Eugene O'Neill or Thomas Wolfe. However, I don't know the au-

The Criminal Record

The Saturday Review's Guide to Detective Fiction

Title and Author	*Crime, Place, Sleuth*	*Summing Up*	*Verdict*
MURDER ON EVERY FLOOR *Ann Demarest* (Hillman-Curl: $2.)	Brother and sister slain in sinister N. Y. apartment house. Handsome young lawyer assists city cops to solution.	Begins all right and continues very nicely, with plentiful thrills and satisfactorily tangled plot—but ending folds up dismally.	Disappointing
MURDER GOES TO THE WORLD'S FAIR *Timothy Brace* (Dutton: $2.)	Nazi and Russian stabbed at "Peace Dinners" in World's Fair. Anthony Adams and exposition police unravel widely ramified plot.	When Adams comes down offen his stilts the yarn is good. Exotic snake-dancer gizes zip to performance.	Average

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thors as well as Professor Koch does, and he has every chance of being righter about them than I am.

The most interesting part of the whole adventure, to me, is that for twenty years the Playmakers Theater has carried on, successfully, given pleasure to many people, and taught those who have worked with it something about the theater and something about American life that they might not have come to otherwise. From every point of view, that is a sizable achievement. Nor has its influence been confined to North Carolina alone. There is a regional drama growing up, outside Broadway — there is a chance, at a number of different universities, for the youngster who has written a play to get it produced in front of an audience. And for all this, Professor Koch, as one of the pioneers, is very largely responsible. As valuable a contribution as any in the book is his own modest and sensible essay, "American Folk Drama in the Making." It should be required reading for all those interested in regional letters.

Italy in Practice

THE CORPORATE STATE IN ACTION. By Carl T. Schmidt. New York: Oxford University Press. 1939. 173 *pp.* $2.25.

Reviewed by MAX ASCOLI

DR. SCHMIDT'S book is a sober and conscientious piece of work. It tells once more the story of how fascism happened to come into power in Italy and what it has been making of that country. The new tale is not particularly brightened by literary graces, but is developed with competent knowledge of the subject matter. It is only to be regretted that Dr. Schmidt, an economist of distinction, has not limited himself to the economic history and analysis of Fascist Italy. Had he used the approach in which he is particularly skillful, he would have contributed a book which is still lacking in the abundant literature on the subject. Yet this book shows that it has been written by an economist: one has only to observe the disproportion in weight and importance between the passages where the author deals with economic facts and those where he attempts historical sketches and political analyses.

The author's sentiments are outspoken against fascism, and it is refreshing to see here how scientific objectivity can be combined with partisanship. Perhaps in this direction, too, Dr. Schmidt went a little too far. He has followed the trend of many Italian anti-fascists who consider the regime they hate in an international vacuum, as if it had no relations with the social and economic forces of our day operating all the world over. With these qualifications the book can be recommended as one of the most reliable essays on the subject.

1601 and All That

1601. By Mark Twain. Edited by Franklin J. Meine. The Mark Twain Society of Chicago (Privately Printed). 1939. 80 *pp.* $6.

Reviewed by BASIL DAVENPORT

IN his introduction, Mr. Meine objects to Professor Wagenknecht's characterization of "1601" as "the most famous piece of pornography in American literature," on the ground that it is not erotic. As an alternative, one may propose "the most overrated piece of scatology," since if it is not *peri pornon*, it is certainly *peri skatos*. By reputation, at least, it will be known to most readers (perhaps by its subtitle, "Conversation as It Was by the Social Fireside in the Time of the Tudors"); it represents Queen Elizabeth, a group of her ladies in waiting, and Shakespeare and other authors, industriously talking filth, without wit or humor, a salad made of nothing but garlic, without so much as a pinch of salt to commend it. This laborious muck-heap is here enshrined in a limited edition, containing a reprint of the first printing, a facsimile of an edition in imitation-Elizabethan type, an introduction and notes, and a bibliography; and one is compelled to ask, why?

In themselves, the words which give it its claim to fame are no funnier in a limited edition than chalked up on a wall. By being put into the mouth of Queen Elizabeth and her ladies, they become somewhat funnier, but not so much funnier as all that. They achieve the height of "'Hell!' said the duchess"; but even if you make the duchess a queen, and "Hell" an unprintable word, that phrase will not carry a whole book. As for Mark Twain's claim, whether serious or not, that "1601" is of value as showing the actual standards of the Elizabethan court, that of course is nonsense; one need only cite the courtier who went into exile for seven years for the same breach of decorum which is the beginning of the merriment in "1601," or the fact that when Sir John Harington translated some of the mildly indecent epigrams of Ariosto and showed them to the maids of honor, Queen Elizabeth imposed on him as a penance the translation of the whole "Orlando Furioso" before permitting him to return to court. Mark Twain, justly resenting the nineteenth-century taboos under which he wrote, always erred both in exaggerating freedom of earlier authors, and in supposing that a lady would allow in her drawing-room what she would permit on the stage. His historic judgment in this matter stands on the same level with his artistic judgment delivered in the heat of the same resentment, when (in a passage from "The Innocents Abroad," quoted by his present editor) he called Titian's Venus "the foulest, the vilest, the obscenest picture the world possesses."

One can understand that; and one can understand why, in the nineteenth century, it aroused so much laughter; it was the laughter of the forbidden; children who are out of bed when they ought to be in it will giggle for the same reason. But that with all our present freedom, this hoary indecency should still command such interest, that in a world with "The Country Wife" to read and so many really good unprintable limericks to print privately, so much pains should be lavished on "1601," is melancholy indeed.

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The New Books

Belles-Lettres

THE PRIVILEGE OF AGE. By Vida Scudder. Dutton. 1939. 319 *pp.* $3.50.

This collection of essays contains the most significant work of Miss Vida Scudder during the past twenty-five years. It shows the wide range of interest and catholicity of taste that have long been associated with her writing. The essay which gives its title to the volume is the only one that treats specifically of age and its privileges, but the rest of them exemplify what the first states—that the greatest gain from accumulated years is the freedom from what the author calls "greediness" (a personal attitude towards life and events) with the attendant accession of detached interest in man and his works. Many of the essays deal with Miss Scudder's ideas on religion, which are based on the broadest of reading and interest and a lifelong concern with bringing Christian and social ideals into closer harmony. Eastern thought has greatly influenced her philosophy, and this book brings the fact before us again in the many sympathetic interpretations of Oriental writings and ideas. Always keenly aware of the social and political scene, the author turns her attention in several of these essays to an analysis of current ideologies, and succeeds in saying something new on themes and characters already much inkstained from being written about. Since the publication of her first work in the mythically gay nineties, Miss Scudder has always been a force in progressive education and liberal thinking, at the same time that a Quaker-like serenity has preserved her from the bitterness of latter-day radicalism. These selected contemplative essays will be welcomed by her many admirers.

G. G.

Fiction

LET ME BREATHE THUNDER. By William Attaway. Doubleday, Doran. 1939. 267 *pp.* $2.

William Attaway writes easily, the way a man walks or tells a tale, with natural vigor and his objective clear every foot of the way. His first novel is one that shows off this kind of writing most effectively: a hard-bitten story of two roaming hoboes, working stiffs, and a Mexican boy they have picked up somewhere on the road. The little Mexican injects a fresh element into their lives, a note of responsibility and, irresistibly, against all stubbornness, a note of tenderness. Upon this level of unwilling masculine sentiment the tale spins its length, moving briskly and with unfailing narrative skill, towards its desperate climax. All of this is on the credit side. On the debit, we must note that Mr. Attaway has projected much of his dramatic experience (he has written and acted in plays) into his writing. Too many of his scenes are plainly stagy, seen as tableaus in terms of groups and gestures, or heard as dramatic speeches, with an eye towards effective curtains and black-outs. Sometimes he lets his characters say things that might carry a punch across the little-theater footlights, without carrying any credibility in a realistic novel. One end-product of this staginess is the cutting of the story into scenes that ought naturally to have flowed together. Mr. Attaway will write a better novel when he puts the stage entirely behind him.

N. L. R.

A SON OF THE SEA. By Sara Ware Bassett. Doubleday, Doran. 1939. 270 *pp.* $2.

Today, when the youth of Stratford speak the tongue of Steinbeck and James M. Cain, when filling station attendants in Cornwall reply OK to your "thank you," it is refreshing now and again to return to the atmosphere of the English-Speaking Union, where it is America that is the literary province. Miss Bassett's newest novel, in its genteel English slang and its absence of contemporary insecurity, tenseness, and quickness, belongs in those great days of the *Atlantic Monthly* which preceded the Civil War. It was designed for that saintly white-haired grandmother who in advertisements is all day sitting and knitting and dreaming; it is tender, conventional, and unreal as she. In one episode, at least, Miss Bassett outdoes her models of the fifties. This is the climax of the story, which so far has told how the middle-aged Stephen, a magazine editor, returns to the Cape Cod of his ancestors to recuperate from a nervous breakdown. There he falls in love with young Marylee. But he has a rival, young Lin Brewster, and it is Lin whom Marylee finally chooses. The fortunate Lin at once makes the supreme sacrifice; to save another life, he jeopardizes his own. Knocking Marylee out cold, so that she will not follow him, he plunges into a burning building—to emerge a few moments later, far less damaged than Marylee, having rescued her dog. This, it seems, is a heroic tale to Cape Cod, on which Miss Bassett is an authority. Now, on Cape Ann. . . .

K. S.

NOT ALL YOUR LAUGHTER. By Sally Gibbs. Appleton-Century. 1939. 237 *pp.* $2.

A book about people completely removed from the exigencies of eating and working and raising children is not likely to be popular in an age which demands an excess of social

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consciousness from its authors. To make up for writing about rich and parasitic characters, the author must give his readers either adventure, or humor, or real character. "Not All Your Laughter," a book about a group of New York's café society, falls far short of these demands.

In brief terms, it describes the spiritual conflicts of three gay, moneyed young men as they come in contact with a beautiful, lonely, enigmatic lady. All four meet with tragedy. But their anguished antics disgust rather than move the reader, and the subsidiary love story, sweet and lavender-smelling, is a very pale and unconvincing affair, leaving the reader entirely cold.

One trouble is the author's preoccupation with her style. Miss Gibbs is so anxious to be poetic and intense that she does not present any clean-cut pictures, either of characters or situations. Her characters' conversation is artificial and fuzzy where it is meant to be philosophic, heavy where it is meant to be amusing. The characters do not come alive at any point. And they are such unpleasant, futile, and trivial people that the reader does not really care whether they are alive or not. There is no good excuse for such a book as this: it has neither social consequence, nor arresting characters, nor humor, nor adventure; it isn't e v e n particularly sexy.

K. W. S.

International

WORLD ECONOMY IN TRANSITION. By Eugene Staley. New York: Council on Foreign Relations. 1939. 340 *pp., with index.* $3.

Within modern technological society with its intricacies and its vast improvement in production techniques lies the conflict between economic structure and national political boundaries. Mr. Staley has set out to focalize some of these problems growing out of the techniques of modern production which have leaped far ahead of the barriers set up by the existence of national political states. He therefore pleads for diminishing "the economic significance of political boundaries," which must inevitably lead to imperialistic wars of conquest. The emphasis on technology as an explanation for the transition of world economy, rather than on current political ideologies, makes his book a significant contribution to monistic materialism.

Mr. Staley denies the desirability of reverting to national localism, which would be more costly to society and would perhaps tend to multiply economic friction. The modern state therefore, if it is not to live in chaos, must learn to adopt itself to the principles of laissez-faire and positive, rather than restrictive, planning. Staley's sincere plea for peace through international coöperation, and h i s keen awareness of the rejection of this principle by dictators, lead him to place a heavy responsibility on the United States as a world power. A policy of autarchy would undoubtedly lessen our own production and world trade. The United States must, therefore, if it is to avert war, adopt a program of positive and unrestricted international trade, rather than take refuge in the new mercantilism.

J. C.

Travel

SEVEN GRASS HUTS. By Cecile Hulse Matschat. Farrar & Rinehart. 1939. 281 *pp.* $3.

If good material were enough to make a good book, Mrs. Matschat's account of her life in the countries to the south would be one of the best. As the wife of an engineer whose jobs took him into remote wildernesses, she kept house successively in Matto Grosso, Amazonia, Patagonia, Bolivia, the Gran Chaco, Darien, and British Honduras. She lived in grass huts like any primitive woman, and traveled by dugout along obscure tropical rivers; great snakes reared their heads to hiss at her, peccaries threatened her with bloodstained tusks; Lacandone Indians set trained ocelots to keep her captive—and one night she had to flee for her life through savage jungle, the Lacandones presumably hot on her trail. This reviewer, who has traveled some of the same trails and seen the Lacandone in his native wilds, might think these stories exaggerated if he allowed himself to judge by his own experience — which he refrains from doing. That such hair-raising adventures should be the common lot of one traveler, while unknown to others, merely illustrates the capriciousness of all experience.

What makes "Seven Grass Huts" something less than a good book, however, is that the author seems continually to overexert herself in the effort to squeeze every last drop of drama out of her material. Many attractive photographs show the types of country, people, animals, and plants that formed the background of the adventures, and pen-sketches by the author illustrate the adventures themselves.

L. J. H., Jr.

ROMANCE OF THE NATIONAL PARKS. By Harlean James. Macmillan. 1939. 240 *pp., with index.* $3.

The text of this book is informative, but more convenient than important. It summarizes the history and describes the nature of the national parks. The photographs, however, are extraordinarily fine. The book can be recommended, not only as a preparation for traveling, but also and more particularly as a souvenir of a trip through the parks.

H. S. C.

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Double-Crostics: No. 275

By ELIZABETH S. KINGSLEY

■	1-I	2-R	3-X	4-A	■	5-M	6-A	7-I	■	8-M	9-D	10-R	■	11-T	12-A
13-X	■	14-Q	15-F	16-P	17-M	18-D	19-C	20-S	21-U	22-T	23-E	24-O	25-X	■	26-I
27-A	■	28-U	29-M	30-K	31-S	32-P	■	33-C	34-B	35-M	36-E	37-G	■	38-H	39-I
40-B	■	41-D	42-G	43-S	44-U	45-H	46-F	47-M	■	48-H	49-M	■	50-B	51-L	■
52-M	53-A	54-G	55-U	■	56-T	57-S	58-J	59-E	■	60-K	61-G	62-W	■	63-C	64-R
■	65-V	66-X	67-C	68-I	69-H	■	70-H	71-G	72-I	■	73-C	74-Q	75-R	76-A	77-N
78-O	79-T	80-M	81-U	82-S	■	83-O	84-G	85-T	■	86-K	87-E	88-I	■	89-J	90-W
91-F	92-T	93-N	94-P	95-U	96-H	97-E	98-D	99-M	100-C	101-V	102-K	103-Q	■	104-W	105-I
■	106-N	107-U	108-W	109-A	110-H	111-V	■	112-L	113-V	114-B	■	115-J	116-N	117-I	■
118-X	119-L	■	120-W	■	121-N	122-T	123-D	124-W	125-K	126-O	■	127-S	128-T	129-F	130-P
131-N	132-K	133-U	134-T	135-R	136-L	137-C	■	138-J	139-G	140-V	141-Q	142-O	■	143-N	144-T
145-B	146-G	■	147-A	148-H	149-K	150-U	151-F	■	152-U	153-P	154-Q	155-R	156-K	■	■

DIRECTIONS

To solve this puzzle you must guess twenty-four words, the definitions of which are given in the column headed DEFINITIONS. The letters in each word to be guessed are numbered. These numbers appear under the dashes in the column headed WORDS. There is a dash for each letter in the required word. The key letters in the squares are for convenience, indicating to which word in the definitions each letter in the diagram belongs. When you have guessed a word, fill it in on the dashes; then write each letter in the correspondingly numbered square on the puzzle diagram. When the squares are all filled in you will find (by reading from left to right) a quotation from a famous author. Reading up and down the letters mean nothing. The black squares indicate ends of words; therefore words do not necessarily end at the right side of the diagram.

When the column headed WORDS is filled in, the initial letters spell the name of the author and the title of the piece from which the quotation has been taken. Authority for spelling and definitions is Webster's New International Dictionary (second edition).

The solution of last week's *Double Crostic* will be found on page 16 of this issue.

DEFINITIONS

A. Vicar of Wakefield (surname.)

B. Shakespearean forest.

C. Boorish; unknown (obs.)

D. Flower emblem of New Hampshire.

E. First name of Yale benefactor.

F. Burrows.

G. Novel by Aphra Behn (1688.)

H. Braggart.

I. Mother of Ethelred the Unready.

J. Underjaw.

K. Darkened, gloomy.

L. One of the Parcae.

M. Allied.

N. Uproars (comp.—slang.)

O. Shepherds.

P. Accept.

Q. New.

R. God.

S. Clamored.

T. Of value (comp.)

U. Reduce to nothing.

V. Pre-Roman English alphabet.

W. Bohemian composer (1841-1904.)

X. Finnish language.

WORDS

76	53	12	147	109	6	4	27		
50	145	114	40	34					
33	137	73	19	67	100	63			
98	18	9	123	41					
36	59	23	87	97					
15	46	151	91	129					
42	37	84	54	61	71	146	139		
45	148	69	48	96	110	70	38		
88	68	105	72	39	7	117	1	26	
115	89	138	58						
102	30	125	149	156	60	132	86		
119	136	51	112						
8	5	49	29	47	52	99	17	80	35
106	131	121	77	116	143	93			
83	78	126	142	24					
153	32	16	130	94					
103	74	154	14	141					
64	10	155	2	135	75				
82	57	20	43	31	127				
56	144	92	134	11	85	79	128	22	122
150	55	81	95	152	133	28	21	44	107
111	140	113	101	65					
62	90	104	108	120	124				
13	3	66	25	118					

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Trade Winds

BY P. E. G. QUERCUS

THE pleasantest forthcoming book on gardening and housekeeping and the local charm and history of an unspoiled region (and mind) is Hulbert Footner's *Charles' Gift,* announced for autumn by Harpers. It is the humane and lovable story of an old house in southern Maryland, built in 1650 and whose family life Maurice Hindus described as "like something by Chekhov." ☞We are still further brooding on that Time Capsule for posterity, sunk at the Flushing Fair "because New York will be an attractive place for archaeologists 5,000 years from now." ☞So says the booklet of details very kindly sent us by Mr. G. Edward Pendray of the Westinghouse Company. ☞Among the literary objects sunk in the capsule was Farmer and Henley's *Dictionary of Slang* (Dutton) to help the archaeologists translate our dialect. ☞Among music, *Flatfoot Floogie* (Old Q. would have preferred *Three Itty Fitties*). ☞Among magazines the women's and the westerns and the news-digests and the brahmin monthlies—but alas no copy of the *S. R. L.* ☞Probably the most valuable thing in the whole capsule is the Sears Roebuck catalogue. ☞The first thing they'll take out in 6939, as it was the last put in, not to get crumpled, was a lady's hat, designed by Lily Daché. Maybe after a look at that they'll be afraid to dig deeper and they'll escape *Flatfoot Floogie* and the picture of a poker game. ☞Doubleday Doran announce *Queen Anne Boleyn,* a novel by Francis Hackett, for early autumn.

☞Will Virginia Scott Miner, whose address we mislaid in the recent office-move, kindly communicate with us? ☞Old Q., whose curiosity is endless in all phases of the book business, sometimes wonders why Houghton Mifflin Company chose *Mulier* as their cable code address. ☞That makes it appropriate to note that Houghton Mifflin Fellowships, $1,000 each, have been awarded to Mary King of New Orleans and Helen Todd of St. Louis. ☞Miss King's project is a novel laid in the Texas oil-fields; Miss Todd's is a biography of U. S. Grant. ☞Six books written with the assistance of the H. M. Fellowships have already been published. ☞One of our desiderata, which we hope some Oxonian will supply, is the exact text of the Latin citation addressed lately to P. G. Wodehouse when Oxford made him an honorary Doctor of Letters. According to the N. Y. *Times,* the Public Orator, Dr. Cyril Bailey, suggested in Latin verse the humors of Jeeves and others. ☞Harold Stokes much pleases Old Q. by quoting Rousseau's *Confessions*: "Should you see me at the point of death, carry me under the shade of an oak, and I promise you I shall recover." ☞Farrar & Rinehart will publish on July 13 *You Can Live In An Apartment,* by Dorothy Duncan, a book that began a year or so ago as the result of an ad in the *S. R. L.* PERSONALS, when F. & R. advertised for an author.

☞Speaking of the oak, old Palliating Quercus was grieved to note that in remodelling one of the Union News Company soda fountains at Grand Central the long-admired bronze tablet bearing his name and symbolic embossing of the oak and acorns, had been removed. We at once inquired about this, and Mr. Harry W. Thedford of the U. N. Co. has kindly promised an attempt to rediscover the plaque. Old Q. had always regarded that bronze as a genealogical landmark and frequently bought a cup of coffee just to ponder it at ease. ☞Bert Lippincott, junior partner in the firm of J. B. L., is now a bookseller as well as publisher. He has taken over a bookshop in Jenkintown, Pa., one of the most esteemed commuters' pauses on the (appropriately) Reading Railroad. A MS-warming was given there recently for a new novel by Marian Sims.

☞Columbia University Press, making a habit of stirring up the animals, is now conducting a poll of suggestions for a series of postage stamps to honor American writers. Thirty-eight authors have been mentioned; so far Emerson, Twain and Whitman are in the lead. They invite ballots from anyone interested: simply list, in order of preference, 5 American authors (not living) you think should go on a series of commemorative stamps. Address to Miss Philately, c/o Columbia University Press, New York City.

☞Two more prize-contest winners are simultaneously announced. Vardis Fisher has been awarded the Harper Novel Prize ($7,500) for *Children of God,* a story of the Mormons. ☞And Agnes Keith has won the Atlantic Non-Fiction Prize ($5,000) for *The Land Below the Wind,* in which the author—an American—tells of her life in Sandakan, North Borneo. Mrs. Keith grew up in Hollywood, is a former San Francisco newspaper woman. ☞Mr. Fisher is author of *In Tragic Life,* and other novels.

Ford Madox Ford

As we go to press, we learn of the death, at 66, of Ford Madox Ford in Deauville. Collaborator with Conrad, friend of many important writers from the days of Henry James and Stephen Crane, Mr. Ford was a champion of good literature both conventional and experimental. Among his own novels are *Some Do Not* and *A Man Could Stand Up;* his last book, *The March of Literature,* appeared in 1938. Mr. Ford was a valued friend and contributor of *The S. R. L.;* his article in our issue of June 10 was to have been the first of a series.

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